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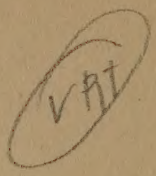

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HEAVENS

HEAVENS

By

LOUIS
UNTERMEYER
Author of "The New Adam," "Including Horace," "Challenge," etc.

WITH A COVER DESIGN AND FRONTISPIECE
BY C. BERTRAM HARTMAN

02118002060745

NEW YORK
HARCOURT, BRACE AND COMPANY

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HARCOURT, BRACE AND COMPANY, INC.

PRINTED IN THE U. S. A. BY
THE QUINN & BODEN COMPANY
RAHWAY, N. J.

304125

Putting up his blunted lance and deserting, for all time, the ensanguined lists of Parody, the author dedicates these feints and skirmishes in that field to

JAMES BRANCH CABELL
HENRY LOUIS MENCKEN
CARL SANDBURG
AMY LOWELL
ET AL.

With the comforting assurance that to the victims belong the spoils.

The first part of *Heavens,* with the exception of the chapter, "The Heaven of Lost Memoirs," which has never appeared in print, was published originally in *Broom.* For permission to reprint it in this amended form, my thanks are herewith presented to Messrs. Alfred Kreymborg and Harold A. Loeb.

The five previews and other parodies first basked in the glare of publicity in *The New Republic, Broom, Vanity Fair* and *The Literary Review.* The author bows his acknowledgments to the editors of these publications.

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HEAVENS

The Prolog

"So this," I exclaimed with a ghostly facetiousness, "is Heaven!"

It was a vague, sprawling region with no definition of any sort. The place was soundless, lifeless, motionless, save for the continual rising and falling of gauzy curtains of clouds. Except for a pale, gray light, wanly diffused, there was not a trace of color.

"No," said my guide, "you are now in The Limbo of Infinity, a vast stretch that some of our younger members have rechristened The Neutral Zone. It is a kind of ante-chamber in which the guest is left to decide where he will go."

"But I have decided," I replied, with anxious haste, "I want to go to Heaven."

"Which one?" he asked.

"Which one? Why—er—are there more than one?" I gasped.

"There are," he replied, "if the last census can be relied upon, exactly nine hundred and seventy-six of them, not including the three score or so of Secessionist, Extremist, Intimate, Neighborhood, Revolutionary, Village and Little Heavens that have clustered around

the main structures. The principal divisions date back to antiquity; the Movement for Separate Incorporation came in 1935 and was caused, first of all, by the astonishing series of reports by the Committee on Congested Districts. As every one is aware, even the Infinite Void became crowded after the conversion of the Martians and Lunarians to your remarkable earthly standards."

I gulped, "But must I choose? All I want is a comfortable cloud, a small harp and a neat, not too close-fitting halo."

"I am sorry, but that is the rule," he assured me. "Besides, the accessories you mention have been discontinued. The Hygienic and Sanitary Cordon has prohibited the use of halos; the Cumulus Division of the Efficiency Board has taken over the control of clouds which were condemned as a menace to the Public Highways, and the Musicians' Union, Ethereal Local, number x3, has passed a by-law limiting the use of harps to holders of uncancelled cards."

"But—"

"On the other hand," he continued, "you should have no difficulty in selecting an appropriate sphere. What were you before you came here?"

"A crit—a book-reviewer," I blushed.

"Ah," he beamed, "a lover of literature!"

"A book-reviewer," I insisted.

"Well," he went on, unheeding, "your place is obviously in a branch of the Literary Heavens—just which one I cannot say. Have you any favorite god?"

"None in particular. That is, not now. I used to worship my lost preferences and prejudices."

"You will regain them," he chuckled. "'Gone but not forgotten' is true of characteristics that are not mentioned on tomb-stones. One of the delightful surprises awaiting the dear departed is to see his most cherished convictions in cap-and-bells attending the coronation of his pet aversion. But I digress."

"Don't apologize," I hastened to add. "Digression is an art, not an accident. You were saying—"

"I was saying that a corner in one of the Literary Realms should suit you admirably. Which would you prefer—the H. G. Wells Heaven, the *Vers Libre* Heaven, the George Moore Heaven, the G. K. Chesterton Heaven, the Robert W. Chambers Heaven, the Freudian Heaven, the—"

"Heavens!" I exclaimed, not irreverently. "I could never decide offhand. Would it not be possible for me to try them first? Not all of them, of course—just three or four of the more popular ones—or possibly a meagre half-dozen?"

"I don't know," he said dubiously. "It isn't done and it's not quite regular. Still, there's no particular law against it. On the other hand—"

"Be human," I urged the angelic creature. "A day in each would do—a few hours—even a glimpse."

"Well," he temporized, "the windows are tall but not so high. If you could get a foothold on the sills, you could see and hear. They found it futile to shut the windows or draw the shades after the subconscious was discovered. You must be prepared for anything, I warn you. If you still have the curiosity and courage, I will lead you. Come."

I followed.

THE HEAVEN OF QUEER STARS

THE darkness was slashed with two intersecting bars of silver that split the sky. They lay on the monstrous clouds like two swords still shining with the faith of those who had swung them. They made, according to the view of the beholder, the pattern of some stupendous hieroglyphic which man must either decipher or die, or the still simpler pattern which men have died to decipher, the pattern of a cross. Although the design did not change, the play of light was constantly shifting; the two blades of brilliance flashed, burned and coruscated with colors that were as glittering and strange as a futurist poem or sunrise in the wrong quarter of the sky. It was a wild and spectacular radiance, so dazzling that the sparkle of the stars was wasted and every sun that flamed seemed a prodigal sun. One could perceive nothing else. One was, however, aware of a vast undercurrent of gaiety, a bright violence, that swept through space with the magnificent gusto of a March wind. It was as though some gigantic virtuoso were improvising vast runs and terrific chords of mirth on an elemental orchestra of light, wood, winds and water. It rocked with a benign and

boisterous vigor; an upheaval that was fervently humorous and furiously holy.

(*"I can't make head or tail of this. It's all so brilliantly confusing," I complained to my guide. "My head is spinning—upside down."*

"That's the effect the Chesterton Heaven has on every one at first," he assured me. "Wait a few moments; the dazzle will wear off and you'll notice many things as familiar as they are astonishing. See—the air is beginning to clear.")

A more diffused but no less vivid light spread itself over the sky. It picked out curious corners and kindled them till they shone like candled niches; it burned the gray fields of space till they roared like a battlefield; it tipped the crests of sleeping clouds till they woke and shook their gilded plumes, like knights roused by the clashing of steel. The accolade of sunlight fell impartially on endless spires, titanic peaks, sacred pinnacles and a few thousand spirits who had nothing in common but their uncommon size. There was not one figure in the crowds that was not six feet high and at least four feet wide. They were gargantuan, globular, glorious. And, what is more, they were galumphing. They were, it became increasingly evident, the source and center of the mad gaiety that im-

pelled their universe. Every one seemed bent on performing some athleticism more acrobatic than his fellow. Some were skipping on and off incredibly high walls, some were savagely demolishing figures of straw, some were sliding down two-mile banisters, some springing up fan-like and fantastic trees, while others were continually erecting ridiculous obstacles over which they would immediately bound like joyful and gigantic footballs. Still others, dressed like mystical Punchinellos, were playing leap-frog among the stars.

In this excited universe there were only two figures that remained without motion. These two, as though carved in Gothic stone, were seated on a low eminence the very position of which was as contradictory as the two who occupied it. One of this queer couple was a round, red-faced, blinking individual who might have been either a butcher or a priest. The other had the indubitable figure of a Greek poet and the face of a dubious Greek god; his features were almost perfect except for a particularly long and peculiarly cleft chin. There was nothing angelic about him and yet he bore the unmistakable traces of one who had once been one of God's chief angels.

"You are wrong again," he was saying. "There is no divinity in peace. There can be no such thing as a divine content. Discontent is the power that drives

the worlds. The angry waters send storming regiments upon the earth—and new life appears. The placid waters collect scum on a stagnant lake—and spread death on everything they touch. Men do not know where their deliverance lies nor who is their true deliverer. They grope—"

"Sometimes they hold things beyond their grasp," mildly interpolated the rubicund one.

"They grope," continued his companion, "in a darkness that is no less dark for being electric; a darkness compared to which the so-called Dark Ages were, if I may be permitted the metaphor, a succession of brief but blinding shooting-stars. Wild deeds and wilder thoughts may have reddened many a sanguine day; but if the years shone like short-lived and sinister suns, at least they shone."

"If you will pardon a—"

"The blacksmith," he went on, unheeding, "in those days had a position as dignified as the songsmith; the armor he fashioned protected men by covering their bodies. To-day the same iron destroys them since it has entered their souls. Hospitality was once something more than a weak invitation for a week-end. One could be sure of cakes and ale at every door-step and every house was a public-house. People as well as periods have changed. They have turned with a disheartening docility, from the time-spirit to *The Times*."

"If you will pardon me, they have done nothing so radical," objected the simpler person, "they have merely substituted the middle classes for the Middle Ages."

"They have done something far worse. They have learned to worship only the middles; either extreme is too much for them. And so they have become the creatures of their own creation. It used to be considered cheap, for instance, to own slaves. They have advanced economically; they find it cheaper to *be* slaves. . . . In nothing is their slavery so apparent as in the fetters they place upon themselves. No longer do they cry out 'These bonds are unworthy of us.' They ask, in an excess of humility, 'Are we worthy of our chains?' No matter how they are held up they refuse to be cast down. If any of them bear a cross, they insist that they are carrying on a new kind of physical culture.

"And thus, a lethargic content, a monstrous satisfaction has begun to sap their blood. It has crept, like some unnameable horror, into their minds; it lays its bloated hands upon the gyrations of the sun and twines its clammy fingers around the unconscious centuries. Dissatisfaction is their only remedy, their most potent saviour. Revolt is the heritage of a bountiful energy; it is only the lack of it which is revolting. I am glad to feel that the iconoclastic impulse is grow-

ing stronger. I am happy when I observe that every dawn is a novel and more startling experiment of that discontented spirit which we call Nature. It cheers me to know that every time the earth revolves upon its axis we have actually accomplished, with a quiet but terrible insurgence, a daily revolution."

"You are such an eloquent talker," said the other, a bit wistfully, "that I am sure you are wrong. The surprising beauty about the stars and these heavens is not the fact that they are novel but that they are, what is even more surprising, very old. A novel thing is the least enduring thing in the world—even to the novelist. It is only something that is quite common or really old, like country wine or the belief in immortality, that is forever freshening and new. It is only the bright sins and black virtues celebrated by minor poets that deny the miracles of existence."

"And I deny them also," rejoined the saturnine being whose chin had somehow elongated into a pointed tuft of beard, "the best thing about miracles is that they cannot possibly happen."

"The best and strangest thing about miracles," quietly replied the combination that was part Santa Claus and part Father Brown, "is that they are always happening. A decadent playwright actually does lead an army that conquers a city. Steel leaps through the water and floats in the air. A man in London

talks to a woman in Chicago without raising his voice. A fanatic in a corner of Europe precipitates a world-war with a bomb, and a college president on the other side of the ocean stops it with a phrase. You see, the whole trouble with ordinary living is that it is such an extraordinary and wild succession of impossibilities; a kaleidoscope of staggering surprises so continuous that, in the vulgar but vivid idiom of the American, Dr. Harvey W. Fletcher, life is just one darn miracle after another. Look!"

It was an exclamation so sharp that the voice was curiously flat. A concourse of stars had gathered while the two had been debating and were scattering largesses of light. During the last sentences the spheres had grown larger and more animated; their half-discernible faces shone with a brilliance that was better than good news told by a pessimist. They clustered about a radiant giant who held up his hand like a quivering *baton*. As it descended, he began to beat the time for a lunging measure and tremendous voices swept the sky.

"The stars are singing!" cried the defender of miracles, "the morning stars led by St. Rabelais!"

"And what are they singing?" mocked the diabolic debater, "The Paradoxology?"

"Listen!" commanded the other.

And this, to a tune where planets set the *tempo*,

where moons were quarter tones and in which comets were grace-notes, were the words of the song:

The lanes that run through the Sussex downs
  Are spiced with a savory salt,
And the crooked streets of Wessex towns
  Are fruity with hops and malt;
They've kegs of ale and rum for sale
  In fields where the Ule slips by;
And the roads that run through barleycorn
  Will lead you straight to Rye.

The path dividing Kensal Green
  Is sharp as a Christian sword;
It cuts through poisonous alleys clean
  To the heart of the dark East ward.
Its lamps are stars where the scimitars
  And the moons of the Orient toss,
And you turn from the Golden Crescent
  To come to St. George's Cross.

The ocean's path is a rolling track
  Where the shark can enjoy his feast;
The jungle's maze is cruel and black
  With gods more brute than a beast.
But England lies where the holy skies
  Are warmer than wine or home—
And the roads that run to the ends of the earth
  Will lead you safe to Rome.

"A very pretty catch," sneered the spirit of negation, "very romantic and very ridiculous."

"Perhaps," answered his opponent, more mildly than ever, "and yet the quality of ridicule is greater than you may imagine. Birth is a sublime adventure in the ridiculous. And what is death but a heroic return; a transposition, I might say, from the ridiculous to the sublime! It is only the fool that fears being thought foolish for trumpeting trivialities. Trifles, after all, are tremendous simply because they are too obvious to be noticed by anybody but detectives and poets. It is not the fool who discovers the commonplace for us; it is the poet who startles us with his own rapturous amazement upon discovering that the sky is still blue and that grass is even greener than the most modern nude by Matisse. It is not the fool fearing ridicule, but the brave man who can face an audience with nothing more startling than the news that God's in His Heaven, that death ends all our troubles and that a penny saved is a penny earned. It requires no hardihood to utter a glittering and anarchic sophistry. There is only one thing that takes all a man's courage to maintain—and that is a platitude. Here, thank the God of the Perfect Paradox, you will find only those daring champions who have never faltered in their allegiance to the obvious. Here are those who have devoted their energies to a celebration of the bold precision with which Spring follows Winter, who have

given their lives to prove the theory that two and two actually are four!"

"I can't stand this!" screamed his saturnine opponent. "Talk—talk—talk! I can't get a word in edgeways. Even Goethe gave me a better opportunity. It isn't fair—it isn't—and I'll be roasted in my own fires if I stay here to make a Roman Catholic holiday. I'm going!"

There was a spurt of flame and he vanished. Nothing remained of him but a slight smell of brimstone and a sulphur-yellow blot on the porphyry bench. The skies were darkened for a moment as though a pointed shadow had fallen over them; a wailing cry rose from the gutters and ended among the stars.

"Too bad," sighed the benign dialectician, "I think I almost convinced him."

First Intermission

"Now's your chance," whispered my guide. "His back is turned and you could slip in here for a while. Shall I help you through?"

"No, thanks," I said, "I'm not as keen for the Chesterton Heaven as I thought I was. I'm only a mild agnostic and I could never be happy in an atmosphere where, in order to outdo the other heretics, I would have to embrace the last of all heresies—Orthodoxy. I admit the undeniable exhilaration gained by walking on one's head, but one can overdo this cerebral pedestrianism. And in such a position there is always the possibility not only of talking through one's hat but the graver danger of thinking through one's shoes."

"You seem to be trying already," returned my seraphic director with a quizzical smile.

"Heaven—any other heaven—forbid!" I expostulated. "I am far too dizzy to attempt any such maneuvers. Frankly, that atmosphere was worse than intoxicating. What I wanted was a stimulus. Instead of which, you gave me a stimulant. I need a sedative, one that is a corrective rather than a Chestertonic. Couldn't you let me sample something on that order?"

"Are you weary of the mind so soon?" inquired the angel.

"No," I replied. "But, having just witnessed it at play, I would prefer to watch the mind at work. Couldn't you show me something more orderly and socially serious? Something less scintillating and more static; something controlled not so much by rhetoric as by reason?"

"Very well," he acquiesced, "I'll take you to the most scientific and rational Heaven we've ever had. Come along."

I came.

THE HEAVEN OF THE TIME-MACHINE

§ 1

You must imagine a vast laboratory—a tremendous affair of several thousand miles—stretching its spotless length of Albalune (a by-product of moon-dust that had superseded all wood-work and tilings since 2058), reflecting only the purest of celestial colors. An intricate network of rapidly moving runways spanned the stars; myriads of spinning platforms threaded the upper reaches which were reserved for aerocars travelling at speeds of three hundred miles an hour and upward. The introduction of a dozen new metals in 1970—especially Maximite, Kruppium and Luxpar, to name the three chief members of the important Iridio-Aluminoid family—had revolutionized aerial traffic and when a half century later the full power of atomic energy was released and exploited, land travel ceased entirely. The whirling streets flashed by in a maelstrom of sound. Huge trumpets, grotesquely curved to resemble calla lilies, blared eternity's oldest ethics and its newest advertisements with an impartial clamour. "Harrumph! Harrumph! Baroom! Look slippy! All the latest styles in latter-

day creeds! Special Bargains To-Day in Neo-Paganism! Large Assortment! Baroom! Ham's Halos for Happiness! Ask Adam—He Knows! Harrumph! Harrumph!"

§ 2

Down one of these runways, seated on a machine not unlike a twentieth century bicycle but far more delicate and equipped with dozens of sensitive antennæ, advanced a figure. You had to look twice at his fantastic costume to assure yourself that this was a man. You figure him a sallow, plumpish person, a little over middle size and age, bespectacled, and with a thinning of the hair on his dolicocephalic head—a baldness, if one examined closely, that might have been covered by a shilling. His clothes, conforming to the ethereal fashion, were loosely draped rather than tubular; woven of some bright semi-pneumatic material, ingeniously inflated to suggest a sturdiness not naturally his. All vestiges of facial hair had been extracted by a capillotomist in his youth and a neat headdress, not unlike a Phrygian liberty cap, was fastened to his scalp by means of suction. You must picture him borne down one of these ribbons of traffic, past the harr and boom of the Blare Machines, to a quiet curve (corners and all dust-collecting angles had long since vanished from architecture) half-screened off by a

translucent substance resembling milky glass. . . . In the centre of this chamber, on a pedestal of weights and measures, stood a crystal ball that seemed to have a luminous quality of its own. Clouds, colours, half-defined shapes writhed within it; a faint humming seemed to emanate from its now sparkling, now nebulous core. Fastening three of the web-like filaments of the machine to the globe, he pressed a series of studs along what seemed to be the crank-shaft, spun the sphere with a gyroscopic motion and brought it gradually to where a violet ray pierced the ramparts. The light within the crystal ball grew brighter. It turned orange, then flame-colour, then prismatic in its fire, exhausting the spectrum until it assumed an unwavering brilliance. This play of colours was reflected in the features of the crystal-gazer. His expression, almost kaleidoscopic in its changes, was, in quick succession, imaginative, philosophic, extravagant, metaphysical, romantic, quizzical, analytic, middle-class, historical, prophetic.

("Who is it?" I whispered in an awe-struck undertone to my super-terrestrial companion. "Am I actually gazing on God, the Invisible King?"

"Scarcely," replied the unabashed angel. "Those varying features belong to a more local divinity: Wells, the Divisible God."

"But look—" I exclaimed, "he is drawing nearer. . . . He is stopping immediately beneath us. . . . We can even see what is happening inside the crystal. . . . Look—")

§ 3

It is very hard to tell precisely what period was registering itself in the heart of that amazing crystal. One saw walls quite plainly, a table with shaded lamp, books, chairs. From the conversation between the two men—they were both in their aggressive thirties—the place seemed to be England some time in the Nineteen Twenties. The older one, whose name was something incongruously like Fulpper, had a trick of waving his arms whenever words failed him, finishing his expansive sentences with a rush of onomatopoetic sound.

"We can't wait for wisdom, Balsmeer," he was saying, "Life goes too damn fast. We start off at a fair pace, increase our speed a little, lag behind, try to catch up and, first thing you know—*whooosh!* That's what the whole business is: an immense and hideous scramble, an irresistible race ending in heart-break and —*whooosh!*"

"But isn't there such a thing as the scientinc temperament; something that is not carried away so passionately?" inquired Balsmeer.

"Meaning—?"

"Well," continued the younger chap, "I'm what you might call a serious sociological student. I'm earnest straight through. No humor to speak of. No romance. I stumble over bright and beautiful things . . . missing most of 'em, I dare say, but getting on fairly well without 'em. I know there are high ecstasies in the world—splendid music, extraordinary women, stupendous adventures, great and significant raptures—but they are just so many abstractions to me. Scientific truth is the least accessible of mistresses. She disguises herself in unlovely trappings; she hides in filthy places; she is cold, hard, unresponsive. But she can always be found! She is the one certainty, the one radiance I have found in a muddle of dirt and misery and disease."

"And don't you see," pursued Fulpper with exuberant warmth, "that this same Science of yours is the very Romance you're running away from? This whole mechanistic age with its oiled efficiency, its incalculable energy and speed and—*whizz*. . . . What's it all for, anyway? Just to make traffic go quicker? to get the whole mess revolving faster? Not a bit of it. Your Research and my Romance are blood-brothers or dual personalities, to be more exact. . . . I seem to see—wait a minute—I seem to see a time when this Science will be revealed not so much as the God from the Machine as a god within it. A socialized thing. A less-

ener of stupid and unnecessary labor. A force to end the criminal exploitation of man by man. A power to finish, once and for all, the muddle and waste and confusion that destroy the finest human possibilities."

"Yes," Balsmeer conceded, "but—"

"I'm coming to that," continued Fulpper. "That's where Love and Refined Thinking—grrrr!—meet as enemies. Mr. and Mrs. Grundy won't be able to debase the latter and foul the former. Knowledge—a full, frank knowledge—is going to change all that."

"But innocence—"

"It may go. We've tasted the fruit of the tree. You can't have your apple and eat it, any more than Adam could. But there's something better than innocence. There's a fiercer virginity, a more courageous and affirmative purity in wisdom. No more dark whisperings. No more poisonous insinuations, nasty suggestiveness. No more music-hall smut. No French-farce allusions. No more smirching of impulses that are as beautiful as art and as clean as chemistry. No more nightmares of adolescence. No more muddling up to sex. . . . This, please my God or your Science, will cease to be the world of the bully, the enslaved woman, the frightened child—the domain of the mud-pelter, the hypocrite, the professional diplomat. It will no longer be the world of the underworld, the cesspool, the liver-fluke. . . ."

His voice trailed off, incontinently. . . .

§ 4

The crystal became suddenly opaque. For a few minutes there was absolute silence. Then a faint clicking began; invisible pistons tapped out a delicate rhythm. The tympani increased both in volume and speed. A lever shot out from the very heart of the mechanism and the dials of the Time Machine began to register new eras. The radiometer clicked off years, decades, centuries, millennials. . . . Presently the hands stopped. The diffused light within the ball resolved itself; a gray-blue mist lifted from a strange landscape as the magnetic arrow pointed to 5,320,506.

§ 5

It was, as I have said, a strange landscape. There was no color, no motion, not a sign of vegetation. Even as the darkness disappeared, the sun, a great greenish disc half the size of the heavens, sprang out of the icy sea. The planets were drawing nearer together for the final *débâcle*. The rocks on the shore were covered with frozen rime; the shadow of Mars, a dark clinker as round as the forgotten moon, covered the ground. It fell on the faces of the two who sat, as if carved, at the mouth of their subterranean tunnel. . . . They were swathed in bands of thermic elec-

trons; what showed of their faces was bloodless. Their lips did not move—the organs of speech had disappeared during the second stage of telepathic communication—and only the minute dilations of the pupils during some emotional passage, animated their chiselled immobility.

"The waste of it . . . the hideous waste of it," you figure him flashing this to her, "what's the whole push and struggle for? Is every generation to be at the beginning of new things, never at a happy ending? Always prodded or prodding itself on with dreams, half-perceived vistas?"

"My dear . . ." her eyes remonstrated.

"It's you and I against the world," he telepathed. "I guess it's always been that. Two alone against the welter of mud and ugliness, dulness, obstinacy; two tiny rebels against a world frozen with hate and hypocrisy. . . . The pity and shame of it. . . . The shabbiness of it all. . . ."

"But, dear," she challenged, "the human race is still so young. It is still learning to progress."

"Progress!" his pupils contracted. "We are as sunk in apathy and ignorance as our mythical ancestors in the pre-historic twentieth century. Progress is a shibboleth. It's worse—a religion that every one professes and nobody believes in. Where are we now? Education has lost itself in the schools. Sex has been

buried in lies and lingerie. Science is fuddling over its dead bones, trying to reconstruct the brain-cells of the Post-Wilsonian man. . . . Progress! . . . Until this icy earth falls at last into a solid sun, millions of us will come out of our burrows to question what it all means. . . . Here—at the very mouths of our underground tunnels—man once walked, warm and careless and secure. And here, before that, life ran prodigally on every inch of the surface. . . . Here, in some obscure and forgotten epoch, the long-necked Brontosaurus waded and the Diplodocus thrashed his thirty-foot tail among the muggers. Here the giant Moa screamed as the Hesperornis, that strange wingless bird, pursued the fishes through the Mesozoic waters. Here the Protohippus pranced on his three toes and the Tyrannosaurus, buoyed up by fertile mud, preyed on the happy herbivores. . . . And all for what? . . ."

"For something it will be hard to answer but harder to deny," she communed intensely, "for some transfiguration, some sort of world cleansed of its crippling jealousies, its spites, its blunderings. . . . After all, there is a long time ahead. Man has existed for little more than ten or twelve million years. We are still so new. . . . The future is so enormous, so staggering, so superb. Life is forever young . . . forever eager. . . . Men will, in some distant maturity,

adjust their scattered dreams and energies. I see the time when life will have a unified meaning, when even death will be a part of the great integration. And, whether we die or live, mankind is in the making. . . . Old worlds are being exchanged for new. Utopias, anticipations, unguessed brotherhoods, the last conquest of earth and the stars. . . . All so slowly but so confidently in the making. . . . . ."

§ 6

The picture faded out, dissolving imperceptibly, until the ball paled to a mere glassy transparency. . . . The figure in the machine suddenly became energetic. He wheeled about, took his hands from the controlling levers and touched a series of buttons on delicate, jointed rods which terminated in a set of metal hieroglyphs. First one was struck, then another, then a swift succession of notes. The fingers flew faster, as though they sought to wrest some harmony from the heart of the machine. . . . For some time, nothing else was heard but tap, click—tap, tap, tap—click—tap—*ping!*—as the incessant typewriter was driven on through space.

Second Intermission

"WELL, what do you say?" urged my guide. "Is it to be the Heaven of Mr. H. G. Wells?"

"No, no," I shuddered, "I could never stand it. When I was below, it seemed so perfect and inevitable in print. But up here. . . ." I shuddered again. "It is all logical enough, I suppose, but even machinery palls after the first hundred thousand years and the thought of colloquies lasting through eternity with invariable speculations upon the future of a mechanistic society is really too terrible!"

He seemed to regard me with an amusement in which commendation and contempt were equally mixed. "What then, would you prefer?"

"I know I am captious and ungrateful and fickle and all that," I stammered, "but, although I am half ashamed to admit it, I want something less literal and more literary; I would prefer to dwell in some Nirvana where fine writing is fully as important as fine thinking."

"Well," hazarded my interlocutor with what might have been a spiritually suspicious smile, "how literary would you like it?"

"The more the merrier," I answered hastily. "After the lumbering generalities of the previous heaven, nothing could be too special for me. All the æstheticism I once had, demands expression—mine or any one else's. It cries out for a realm where every phase and letter of Art is capitalized, where life exists only as material for brilliant table-talk, where the jargon of great movements and rare names drowns the music of the spheres, where the *dilettante* can loaf and invite his soul-mate, where *belles lettres* are a religion and the *precieux* is regnant."

"Come with me," said the angel with an expression that, in a lesser being, might have been called grim.

"Where are you taking me?" I called.

"To the Heaven of George Moore."

THE HEAVEN OF LOST MEMOIRS

A WALL of almost infinite length. A wall with a peculiar regularity of design interrupting its smoothness. On closer inspection, the design was a door or, to be more exact, a succession of doors. Doors, an infinity of them, with a strange and extraordinarily shining key-hole. Bending down to discover the cause of this unusual brilliance, my eye encountered another eye. I passed to the next key-hole. Again an eye was burning behind it. Another key-hole; another eye. The ocular adventure continued without change; not an absence, not a sign of disappearance or dissent. The eyes seemed to have it by an infinite majority. Another key-hole; another glistening pupil. Another. . . . I could stand it no longer.

Suddenly I found myself on the inside of the doors and George Moore, dusting his knees, was shaking an admonishing forefinger at me.

"A vulgar habit," said he without a trace of self-consciousness, "many of the boys at Oscott did it. But it's wrong. It gives you a squint and the narrowest sort of vision of the world. You really should stop it," he gravely concluded.

It was a strange room full of a determined though musty adolescence, the room of a man born prematurely young. There was no ceiling. The dome of the sky served for that, and it was tinted a delicate mauve. A multitude of nets instead of rugs were spread on the ambiguous floor, nets woven of curious stuffs: a singer's corset-lace, a forgotten dream, a strand of honey-coloured hair, a phrase from Walter Pater, moonlight on a pillow in Orelay, a scrap from the Catechism translated by Verlaine, hopes, aspirations and, here and there, a faint, not too secret shame. The walls were a succession of unfamiliar Monets, Manets, Conders, Pissaros.

"Of course you don't recognize them," Moore was saying. "These are the things that the Impressionists were going to paint and never got round to. Here I can have all the canvases they intended and never had time to begin. This, you see, is Heaven."

"But—" I ventured.

"I know what you're going to say. But that's because you have been glutted with the fat curves and greasy mathematics of the Futurists. If you cannot admire this Pissaro for its magic, admire it for its modern, yes, its ultra-modern morality. It dares to be candid and reticent and self-expressed and virtuous at the same time; it dares you to face yourself, as Degas undoubtedly faced his canvas, and be ashamed

of nothing but shame. What have you to offer against it? Matisse? A jaundiced Debussy who tries to translate his liver-trouble into paint. Seurat? A disorganized palette stricken with spotted fever. Picasso? A tired academician conducting a *liaison* with a Diesel engine. Redon? A sentimental china-painter spraying his colors with a rose-water mysticism. Duchamp? A mad geometrician trying to animate a chess-board. Bracque? Gleizes? Derain? Dull arrangements of *bourgeois* still-life in the fourth dimension. Really, your taste has been debased by Whistler at the one extreme and the Dadaists at the other. You ought to remember your Rochefoucauld."

"But—" I protested.

"Oh, yes, your objection is logical enough. But what has that to do with us to-day? There was a time when such hair-splitting may have carried weight, I grant you. And your protestations are refreshing in one so catholic. But Catholicism, as I have so often pointed out in 'Hail and Farewell,' is incapable of producing great Art. The church of Rome, as I have so often said to poor Edward, has never been the same since the Reformation and, mentioning Newman, I said it must rely more and more on conversion than conviction. What happened to Newman after he 'verted' is history. As his churchly importance grew, he waxed more bathetic; as he became more sentimen-

tal, his style—if you can call it that—became more slipshod and actually sloppy. The fact that he wrote 'The Apologia' in a hurry doesn't excuse him; he was always searching less for some new testament than for an old text. No, you must go further than that, I am afraid. And you'll have to be less argumentative. Language, after all, is not so much a matter of cultivation as an accident of geography. I remember talking about this to a fine, dark-haired girl, about twenty, in Drogheda one morning, a few hours before breakfast. The effect of soil and climate on speech, I told her, was everywhere apparent, even in the remotest of dialects. The harsh winds, the thistles, the rock-like frosts of Scotland are reflected in the cold *timbre,* the sharp burr of those uncouth and granite-like Scotch tones. Lonely versts and terrible winters are in the grinding consonants of the Russians; the rough inhabitants of the craggy Caucasus hurl huge blocks of sound at each other whenever they exchange the mildest greetings. And where else could the sunny, liquid Italian be spoken but beside the golden lakes of Italy, or along its lazy, laughing roads, or in its bays where the sunlight foams and sparkles like the true *Lachrimae Christi?* Not that I have forgotten our own English which still smacks of the racy Elizabethans, in spite of time and the encroachment of the Latinists. English, for all our studios, is still an out-

door language with something of the downs in its freedom and a tang of venison in its rich and gamy accents. . . . Rabelais could have written well in that tongue had he been born in Yorkshire. . . . Delacroix could have painted in that idiom. . . . I remember telling all this to the dark-haired girl early one morning in Drogheda. There was much more in a similar key and, although I have forgotten a great part of our conversation, I remember my saying to her, as the sun was rising, 'And do you differ with me or is it a rather heavy assent you are breathing?' She said or seemed to say something equivocal—I could not catch the syllables as her back was turned. I said, 'For Heaven's sake, have you been asleep all the time I was talking?' She answered, 'For Heaven's sake, have you been talking all the time I was asleep?' She was a sharp, intense creature, an artist in her way, and I remember that the cerise dawn suddenly touched the nape of her little neck and made me think of Ingres' portrait of an unknown lady, the one surnamed La Belle Zélie. . . . But Ingres could never have managed the peculiarly Celtic contradictions of color and temperament. Rubens, for all his preoccupation with barmaids' buttocks, might have done it. . . . Rubens and Rabelais—how they would have loved the English lanes in November when the whole country has the

snap and vigor of fresh ale. . . . Dostoevski would never have understood it."

"But—" I interjected.

"Yes, I know," he went on suavely, "but you must not think I have lost the thread of your not altogether relevant remarks. What I *have* lost is something more important. The various Memoirs of My Dead Lives (there have been at least nine of them—Yeats, you know, has often spoken of my feline characteristics), the five or six Hails and Farewells, to say nothing of a dozen miscellaneous Recollections, Confessions and Reminiscences, all of these have covered my earthly experiences with even more detail than veracity. There is not an hour—except one—which is not enshrined like a fly in the amber of what, making whatever allowances you choose for auctorial modesty, is a very decent prose. But that one missing hour! . . . Its disappearance bothered me until I was faced with the choice of omitting it from my Definitive Autobiography or—hideous alternative—supplying it from my imagination rather than my memory. It was in a train going to Galway, I remember that. And there must have been a great deal of interesting conversation, for my first important play had just been accepted by the Coisde Gnotha and I was bubbling over with ideas for its presentation. I thought of getting Craig to do a curtain for us. There was also a bird-call in the

second act which called for better music than we possessed and I did not want to depend on the chance improvisations of some local, alcoholic flute-player. I thought of asking Debussy to help us out. A week later, I wrote him explaining that I wanted something both spiritual and sensual, a thrush-like fragment for the moment when Una, coming out of her bath, first sees Tumaus. It was not long before I heard from the composer. He wrote:

"'Mon Cher Moore: J'ai reçu votre lettre du 7, et je prends note de son contenu. Aussitôt que je recevrais votre chèque, je vous enverrai ce que vous demandez. J'espère que votre famille va bien. Le temps est vraiment trop chaud pour cette saison. Sincèrement, Claude-Achille Debussy.'

"In less than three months, I received another intimate note, even more brilliant and characteristic of the man, enclosing seven different themes to choose from. But, as they were scored for French horn and contrabass (two instruments that we did not possess), none of the phrases was ever performed. . . . I recollect all this and yet I cannot recapture that lost hour. . . . It is a pity, for I know that much that must have been illuminating and sprightly is lost to my pages. It was, my memory takes me that far, a mixed crowd that listened to me. We were going to a Feis

and I remember speaking of some one as a 'delayed' or was it a 'decayed pre-Raphaelite'? But who? . . . And what else did I say? . . . So I came here, hoping to find my lost memory. It was with a distinctly unpleasant shock that I learned this was called The Heaven of Lost Memoirs because the memoirs actually remained lost. No one—not even their authors—could find them. Well, here I stay, waiting for my strayed sheep to come home, wagging their tales behind them. . . . It is a stupid Celtic idea, this disappointing Heaven. The Celt is never witty, he is only talkative. All the Celtic humour has come out of Dorsetshire."

"But—" I expostulated.

"I am coming to that," continued Moore with imperturbable ease, "but you must not hurry me. I am feeling very *piano* this morning, very *piano*. There were some of your compatriots here yesterday and I dictated a rather brilliant interview to Miss Gough for them. Some of the questions I asked myself were quite in my best vein. 'Is it true, Mr. Moore'—(this is one of them)—'that you will give us no more delightful records of *amour,* no more brightly coloured experiences such as you have so charmingly illuminated in your Euphorion in Texas?' 'Alas,' replied the author of some of the most exquisite English of our day (you see I didn't dare trust the taste of your gentle-

man-journalists), 'Alas! I am no longer a practitioner in Love, only a consultant' . . . I was rather pleased with that, if I do say so. Eglinton would have liked it. Poor John Eglinton, who was always referring to what he called my frigid heresies and my frozen immoralities, would have cherished the neat *insouciance* of such a self-disposal. So different from Yeats, for all their common sympathies. . . . I can see Yeats now, looking for all the world like a badly-drawn, dilapidated crane, his manuscript-case flapping like a black and broken wing. A queer bird, he was, with his beak continually dipped into a world of half-pagan, half-puritan miracles—taking part in a ritual where the wine was always being changed to water. I liked his later angularities particularly. To what instrument can I compare them? I suppose an oboe is fairly accurate—in my younger days, I would have summarized his writing in English rather than in Gaelic by calling it the music of a Celt learning to play the Anglo-Saxophone—but an oboe lacks the uncertain spirituality that Yeats communicated. A viola is more like it or, better still, a celesta. But his early mysticism never impressed me. 'Surely,' I said, 'he must see it is absurd. Can he be serious about this literary moonshine or is it merely *une blague qu'on nous fait?*' It is the last flicker of majestic twilight—a pitiful *Götterdämmerung*—without intensity or strength.

After all, health is played out in England. If we want vigor we find it, not in the floundering language of Hardy or the even more puddling prose of Bennett, but in the newspapers. Health, or rather a sort of trumped-up, synthetic substitute for it, is duly manufactured only in the heretical journalism of Mr. Wells or the journalistic orthodoxy of Mr. Chesterton. . . . Every fine perception of the senses has been brutalized by modernity. How many of our prima-donnas, even the leading seraphs, can sing a manuscript *a capella?* . . . The piano has been the death of music."

"But—" I demurred.

"It was late at night, one winter," he continued without noticing my interruption, "when the thought of the end of Art overwhelmed me. I had been reading Mallarmé in a desultory manner when, in the midst of rather a pompous passage, this sentence leaped at me: 'The world was made for nothing other than to produce one beautiful book.' Suddenly the implications surged over me like a succession of tidal waves. It was a crystallization of my life, a synthesis of my existence. I could not go to bed without telling my discovery; I felt I would burst if I did not go out at once and collogue with some one. But it was one o'clock in the morning and very few of my friends are to be reached at that hour but dear Edward with whom I had had my quarterly quarrel. Synge, I knew, was

somewhere in the Aran Islands hunting native poetry in a celluloid collar; Æ was dreaming of his beloved Angus and Lir; Lady Gregory was at the other end of the city, coddling a *côterie* of fledgling playwrights with an air that was a cross between a mother-hen's and Queen Victoria's. But what are the inconveniences of time or the non-availability of friends to one with a passion for literary conversation! I dashed out, buttoning my greatcoat, past Ely Place and Merrion Row, for I knew there was a coffee-stall at the corner of Clare Street. Would there be any belated patrons there? My heart was as faint as a lover's until, through a flurry of snow, I observed a policeman leaning heavily against the wooden stand. . . . In ten minutes I was deep in a discussion of the aristocracy of Art. The true artist, I remember saying, makes no concessions; he imposes them. Gautier would have understood me. Was it not he who championed the decorative futility of effort when he declared that nothing can be wholly beautiful unless it is wholly useless?"

"But—" I persisted.

"There is little to be gained by disputing. You must accept all things, rejoicing not only in Nature's fecundity but in her contradictions. She is the source, the origin, as I have observed somewhere; she is vulgar but never ordinary. We have only to listen to her

to learn originality. Turgenieff felt glimmerings of this; Dickens never, Balzac still less. . . . You remember Doris of whom I have written? I always used to wonder why her hair, especially when seen in the blond light at Plessy, reminded me less of the golden fleece than of Schopenhauer. I still wonder about it. There was something in the half-lights that only Renoir could have evoked and a touch of the sharp malevolence that is in Jeremiah, the terrible disquiet that makes all of Hebrew literature so hateful a series of *fortissimo* passages. . . . Doris was lavish; she was a prodigal, like poetry or nature. She was, I told Æ, who always treasured the conceit, like a perfumed bedroom trembling with silent music. . . . And yet, what is the aftermath? Flaubert was right. He said, 'Of the pains most passionately felt, what remains? Of the woman most passionately loved, what do we possess? An idea.' How true that is. It took me many years to find what I had been looking for. 'In literature one begins by seeking laboriously for originality in other men's works; one ends by discovering it in himself.' Who said that? It must have been one of the Goncourts, probably Edmond. Still, there is a turn about it that suggests Jules. It could not have been Banville, exquisite though he is. And who could have been the first to declare that 'History is a novel which never happened; a novel is a history

that might have happened?' The Goncourts again. But I have done with novels. I shall write nothing but memoirs here in eternity. The novel is a dead form that can never be resurrected. Only personality and the intimacy of self-confession are worthy of communication. Like Baudelaire, I write for only ten minds. Like him, I do not know their owners. Unlike him, I do not worship them. . . . What more can be expected? Even Victor Hugo, a dull perception as a rule, knew enough to say that in every century not more than three or four men of genius ascend. Well, here I am—still searching for that damnably lost memoir. . . . You'll pardon me, I know, if I excuse myself to continue the hunt. I've enjoyed our little dialogue immensely; you are the sort of gifted conversationalist one always relishes. It has all been most stimulating."

"But—" I exploded.

Third Intermission

"But," I exploded, as my angelic mentor rejoined me, "but did you ever hear such chatter! And he calls it a dialogue! And I suppose he thinks that mad hodge-podge is a philosophy! And those conversational leaps! He isn't an artist, he's a chamois!"

" 'Why so hot, little man?' " replied the angel with an exasperating tolerance. "This, as I understood you, is exactly what you asked for. Am I wrong?"

"Of course not," I said, half pettishly, half penitently, "it's all my own fault. I should have known better. I'm frightfully sorry to put you to all this bother and I know I don't deserve it—but would you let me try again?"

"What shall it be this time?" the spirit asked with the resignation for which his tribe has become famous.

"I don't know exactly," I replied. "Have you, perhaps, a heaven or two that is not so special, one that is neither mechanistically nor artistically technical? Could you not let me see something utterly unrelated to reality, something that might have been conceived in a golden age or an ivory tower; something that has the hues of life but is far more colorful, more poetically

intensified, more tropical and bewildering and bizarre? Have you nothing in that line?"

"Indeed we have," answered the patient being. "There are two or three of which we are actually proud. Unfortunately, I cannot show you one of our most picturesque Nirvanas. It is closed temporarily for repairs, or research, or something of the sort. There are rumors abroad that certain factors have conspired to bring about its temporary suspension. On the one hand, it is accused of being unauthentic; on the other, it is said to be immoral. Being angelic, none of its citizens is able to judge. Frankly, I am sorry I cannot give you an opportunity to determine for yourself."

"But can't you give me a picture of the place? Something at any rate a little more definite?" I pleaded.

"Very possibly. Let me see—" He drew a thin bundle of papers from the folds of a cerulean mantle. "I have here part of a manuscript which was rescued from the super-terrestrial waste-basket of one of its chief inhabitants. It purports to be a translation from certain pre-Provençal poets, but several contradictory anachronisms make me question the existence of the original. At any rate, it is an indubitably accurate portrait of the rich though restricted region I was about to describe. All that I have of this work is a rejected chapter and a title page which reads 'Runes of Life: A Comedy of Disappearances,' Adapted and

Paraphrased from Bülg's *Les Milles Gestes de Deodric* by James Branch Cabell. If you like, I will read it to you."

He did.

THE HEAVEN ABOVE STORYSENDE

They of Poictesme tell the tale how, in the days when the impossible was the one thing that was always happening, Ortnitz rode forth to the battlements of Heaven. They narrate how Duke Ortnitz (who later, was to be known in Ostrogoth as Waldere, in Rossland as Vidigoia and in far Scandia as Hrolfdeodric) set out with a company of scribes, minstrels, poets and other vagabonds. For nine and ninety days and no one knows how many nights, according to the ancient rune, they travelled. Past Pechlarn they rode, through the doubtful country of the Gjuki, skirting the forest of Niflhel where the trees move about miserably in a wailing twilight. At last, after certain adventures which are rather more unmentionable than not, Ortnitz and his companions arrived, as had been predicted, at a pool surrounded by young hazel trees. The circle of green was unbroken save where one half-stripped and aging birch held out its mottled arms in a remarkable gesture that is not to be talked about. Ortnitz dismounted, advanced to the foot of this obscene tree and, after having performed that which was requisite, cried out:

"Now, for the love of that high glamour seen before birth and beyond the grave, we stretch our arms to the moon and stammer intolerably some battered stave. Yet, driven by hungers beyond the yearning for what men take as a surety, I have come to the road that has no turning and call on the Léshy to answer me. I call on Hogni and Mersin-Apollo, careless of whether they choose to descend; for I am Ortnitz and I follow after the unattainable end."

He waited awhile, during which interval a little headless bird flew three times over the pool, and, there being no answer, Ortnitz continued:

"Now, for the dust of that dying beacon wavering still in the tattered shrine of autumn, now that the old lusts weaken and the night is only spilled dregs of wine—drown, in its ineffectual juices, whatever persists of the memories of burning thirsts and the forgotten uses of lips that reveal their inconstancies. Here, on the rim of your magic hollow I have abandoned father and friend; for I am Ortnitz and I follow after the unattainable end."

There was a thin sobbing as a purple mouse perched on the back of a salamander ran in and out of the jewel-weeds. Twice the salamander shed his skin into the waters and twice a faint mist rose from the ripples. Then cried Ortnitz:

"Now for the end of that final glory I wait and bend

a complaisant back, here, where a livid aurora borealis makes all demoniac. Spurning the threat of the headless swallow, I neither doubt, nor deny nor defend; for I am Ortnitz and I—"

These sonorous strophes were broken by a rumble of voices that issued from his retinue. And Ortnitz, comprehending that the spell was broken beyond promise of repair, retraced his steps ruefully. It may be that he felt betrayed by those who should have understood him best; it is indisputable that his high mood was bedwarfed and, impatient at such belittlement, he turned on his companions.

"Do you tell me now without dubiety or odd by-ends of metaphor, what may this turgescible clatter portend?"

"Messire," spoke one of them, a lad called Arnaut Daniel, "we are but men; nevertheless we are poets. And as such we hold, not only to ourselves, a dread responsibility. Look you, the record of these days and unguessed years is in our hands. The world lives only as we tell of it. The lurch of seas, the stealthy footsteps of the grass, the huge strides of the sun across the sky, the mystery and mastery of flesh, this snatch and blaze and insolence of life—who is to know of it save that we sing; how can men learn of it except through us? Therefore, subject to what limitations are placed upon us by our eyes and ears, are we

bound to record only the Good, the Beautiful and the True. And therefore, messire, must we, who though poets are nevertheless men, be bound to differ in the interpretation of these three beatitudes."

Said Ortnitz:

"Ey, but wherein can there be so noisy and divergent an opinion; the good, so runs the ancient cantrap, is always beautiful; the beautiful is true."

Daniel returned:

"Good only for the time being, messire. Beautiful only as a challenge to egotism; in the I of the beholder. True only to the question of Pilate."

"I find that an obscure saying," Ortnitz considered.

"It is an untrue saying," broke in a gaunt fellow with a pair of cold green eyes and an ugly garden utensil which he carried in lieu of an instrument. "There is only one Truth and that is the real truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth. All the Rest is Romanticism. I have not seen the Soul that my friends here prate of, so I cannot call it my own; but I can call this spade a spade. If you will only listen while I play upon it, it will dig up the very roots of song. With it, I will unearth for you the bowels of time. With it I will go down as deep as hell."

"And as high as heaven?" questioned Ortnitz, not very mirthfully.

The Realist answered nothing but with a gesture of despair mounted his horse and, followed by his adherents, departed toward the West.

Then Ortnitz turned to a far more timid being whose dented and flimsy shield bore the device of a crumbling ivory tower. A single white poppy lay sheathed in his painted scabbard, and he was continually discarding and readjusting variously coloured spectacles.

"Do you not heed him, beau sire," exclaimed this woeful but still militant minnesinger, "do you not heed a syllable of his mangled prose. For that which lives to-day is only an echo of what has died—eh, how many times—and all this that seems so permanent is nothing more than the echo of its ghost. For—look you, messire, what is reality but the shadow of romance, a shadow that most men take for the substance. These actual adventures, physical encounters, journeyings of the flesh—they are pallid things compared to the imagined Odysseys. Give up this brutal and flagitious search. Come back with me, master, and behold grass that never fades, love that never deceives, a world without smirch or squalor. Come back with me, and you shall scale insurmountable summits, swim lakes of blood, plunge through hurricanes of fire, possess all women, surpass all heroes. You shall do all this without leaving your hearth."

"And what potent agency will you summon to ac-

complish these not undistinguished miracles?" inquired Ortnitz.

He answered: "The myths and annals of the past."

"An indubitable magic, O dusty dreamer. Yet I am bound for present dangers, newer hazards. For I am Ortnitz and I follow after the unattainable end of which no man ever has had cognizance. Will you not throw away your variously coloured spectacles and follow me who am not altogether blind?"

The Romanticist answered nothing but, with a gesture of dismay, mounted his horse and, followed by his adherents, departed toward the East.

"Nay,—ho, and even were the fellow less pitifully his own fool, you answered him rightly, messire, and you are well rid of him and his wistful tribe!"

This one was a lank individual with womanish hands and rouged lips. He was clad in a brocaded golden stuff that shimmered upon him like scales on a yellow serpent and from time to time he sipped at a curiously carved vial labelled "Poison."

"Hah, what should such a maudlin evader know of Beauty? His luke-warm world has none of it," cried this fantastic madman. "Come with me, master, and you shall live not unmoved among extraordinary hungers, strange and perverse desires. In my demesne, day never dawns and sunlight is unknown. Great evil flowers, undreamed of here, add their hot fragrance

to the spicy night. There our bodies, capable of new and curious pleasures, will lie among lace and lilies, caressed by queens and the hands of queens' daughters. Virgin harlots with breasts like boys' will dance for us beneath a ring of moons while nightingales go mad. Come," he cried with a wan rapture, "we shall hear black masses sung in forests whose design was Time's contemporary and where all uncreated loveliness lies hidden. There, by the Terrible Tree, will we find red Lilith who, rejected by Adam for a white and simpering Eve, assumed the form of a snake and thus rid Paradise of its tepid inhabitants. There, master, you shall never grow sane and temperate and old, but pass from fever to fever, fed by fantastic cravings, roused and rejuvenated by sin."

For a moment Ortnitz meditated, while a shadow no larger than a crow's foot crept into the corner of his eyes.

"Pardieu," he answered at length, "but I am no longer young enough for such a high-flying eternity. These are pretty passions you offer me, to be sure, and I would be the last to examine them too circumspectly, but still," Ortnitz estimated drily, "but still it is not sin alone will bring me to a heaven, however scarlet it may prove to be. What stock have you of innocence? Can you not show me an unaffected virtue or two and a paltry half-dozen of assorted simplicities?"

The Decadent answered nothing but, with a gesture of disdain, mounted his horse and, followed by his adherents, departed toward the South.

Then up spoke the last and youngest leader of them, sweeping a *viola d'amore* that had but one string. His face was smooth and more asexual than an angel's and his thick hair shone like a tossing golden flame. Sang this one:

"Goodness and beauty and truth. . . . Where? Well, but only in song? . . . Honor, Nobility, Youth, Goodness and Beauty—and Truth—shrink from man's clutches. In sooth, no man can hold them for long. . . . Goodness and Beauty and Truth wear well. But only in Song!"

"A skeptical though neatly-joined triolet," smiled Ortnitz. "But you talk in riddles, my fine young poet, for all your cynically smooth generalities. Yet why should I desist? And for what, more specifically, would you have me abandon my quest for truth, justice and those ultimates which are the pavement and the pillars of heaven?"

Thus answered the minstrel:

"I offer you more than earthly riches in coin that none but the poet pays:—Freedom from all the stings and itches of every trivial splutter and blaze; a cup of healing; a stirrup of praise; a mood to meet the

challenge of pleasure; a lilt to the feet of dragging days—all in the heart of a minstrel's measure."

Said Ortnitz: "That is indeed much to promise."

But the youth continued:

"I offer you more. I offer you niches where a sour world's grumbling never strays; where ripples a mirthful music which is an echo of man's first laughter that plays in various keys and secret ways. There still is a land of Light and Leisure (if you will pardon so mouldy a phrase) all in the heart of a minstrel's measure."

Said Ortnitz: "A great deal, to be sure. At the same time—" His interjection was interrupted by the poet who pursued his rhapsody, crying:

"I offer all that ever bewitches the mind of man from its yeas and nays. To the poet, immortal hemistitches; to the soldier, conquest crowned with the bays; to the lover, the breath of a thousand Mays; to the boy, a jingle of buried treasure; to the cheated and broken, a merciful haze. All in the heart of a minstrel's measure.

"Master, I offer what never decays though all else wither. Master, what says your will to the magics that quicken and raise all in the heart of a minstrel's measure?"

He paused.

"My will says no, although my heart approves the purport as well as the burden of your ballade," replied Ortnitz not dispassionately. "But I must go further than this place, even after the unattainable end, and I find little comfort and less pleasure in the doing of it, and I would you were coming with me."

The Lyricist answered nothing but, without lowering his eyes, came closer to Ortnitz. And Ortnitz saw why he would have to make the journey without him, and he spoke:

"And so, farewell, you who dream in rhyme for I see your heaven will always be here, an overwordy and somewhat silly Nirvana but—God help me!—a lovelier place than I have ever known. And so farewell."

And the last poet answered:

"Farewell, Duke Ortnitz, farewell, unhappy clay that seeks what it can never find. Farewell, dreamer whose dreams are ten times more pitiful than mine for that yours have reason but no rhyme. Surely you will go for a while—as long as this niggardly life will allow, it may be—half-disillusioned, half-desperately, questing some comforting finality, some assurance in a world of illimitable perplexities and contradictions. Surely you will be buffeted here and there, searching vainly for the secret of those cryptic platitudes that enliven religion, wars, persecutions, lynchings and all

other such high crusades. And to what end? Eh sirs, you will go down a bitterer man than you are now—a preposterous but not unheroic creature. And so I cry farewell with laughing pity, but with envy, too."

Now the tale tells that Ortnitz was quite alone amid the circle of hazel trees. And, after he had stood there until the wings of the Lyricist's white horse were no longer discernible in the sky, Ortnitz went about his last conjuration with a sadder but no less determined expression. It was a blasphemous and appalling ritual, which it is neither essential nor wise to record. But, after the final ceremonies had been performed with a queerly constructed crystal of sphalerite, and the *jintsan* root shaped like a man had come to life and set about that which was necessary, the waters of the pool were lifted. They grew solid, formed into steps, one ripple following another, until Ortnitz beheld an extraordinary glassy stair-case leading straight toward the zenith. With a not unnatural wonder, he ascended.

For nine and ninety days and no one knows how many nights, Ortnitz climbed those watery stairs. At length he came to the threshold of heaven. He knocked. There was no answer. Then, raising his voice, he cried, "I am Ortnitz, and I have come to learn of what miraculous composition and in what unlikely manner were designed those elements of truth, justice

and goodness which are the pavement and the pillars of heaven."

There was no answer.

Then Ortnitz noticed that the hinges of the gate were rusty and that the huge door itself stood slightly ajar. Leaning his body against it, he pushed it open and entered while space rang with an insane creaking. Ortnitz stood astounded. The place was empty. A few spiders were spinning in what seemed to be an abandoned and primitive courtyard. There were neither pillars nor pavement. And Ortnitz, according to the Völundarkvidha, returned to Storysende.

Thus it was in the old days.

Fourth Intermission

"You do not look as enthusiastic as I had hoped," said my guiding spirit after he had stopped reading.

"No," I answered, "I have not lost my admiration for this web of words but I am afraid I am not mediæval enough to live comfortably in such a tapestry. I have not sufficient poetry in my nature for such highly colored prose; I am too dull a doggerel."

"Granting that," he murmured with a benign tolerance, "what would you have?"

"I don't know exactly," I hesitated, rubbing an astral chin, "I am sure I could never learn to talk this language. I do not understand its signs and symbolic velleities; the whole thing seems perversely cryptic and cabalistic. You see, I'm an American to begin with —much too provincial for Provence—and, coming from the state of Missouri, I . . ."

"Wait—I have an idea," interrupted the angel with no little animation. "I think I know the very place for you. How would you like to dwell in the Middle Western Heaven?"

"You don't mean to tell me that you have a special heaven for midwesterners?" I gasped.

"Not for strictly geographical mid-westerners," he replied with the suspicion of a smile. "But ever since the success of your *Main Street, Moon Calf, Poor White, Miss Lulu Bett* and others, that region has become fixed in the literary firmament. There was nothing else to do but recognize it officially and make the necessary arrangements. The structure, I warn you, is by no means completed; the architecture is rather sketchy, and the material itself is not distinguished by its finish. But you, doubtless, are not over-particular. If you will step this way. . . ."

THE HEAVEN OF MEAN STREETS

A PLACE of crude color and primitive contrasts. A place, indefinite in area and uncertain in its geography, that looked like the meeting-ground and battle-field of a hundred cultures. This apotheosis of the Middle West seemed reared indifferently upon the black mud-banks of the Missouri river, the blare and windy energy of northern Illinois, the gaunt stretches of Minnesota, the epic prairies of Nebraska. A helter-skelter combination of parochial village, stark countryside and cheap, gritty industrial towns—the triumph of the booster over the backwoodsman, the pioneer supplanted by the press-agent. Even the ground had no uniformity. Here ran a wooden pavement with several boards broken and clumps of weeds sprouting in the irregular gaps between the planks; beyond it was trampled dirt, a yellow soil, untilled and stony; opposite, a smug concrete sidewalk with a "parking" of grass was lined with sickly trees on which the *aphis* had been at work.

The architecture—if one could call it that—was similarly nondescript. Ramshackle, unpainted, box-like houses stood among garish two-story brick gro-

ceries, with signs of the B.P.O.E. and Knights of Pythias above the bleached awnings, or leaned apathetically against The Eureka Garage with its grease-blackened, slippery floor. A third generation farmhouse squirmed between The Nemo Moving Picture Palace with its tawdry electric sign in which eight of the bulbs were missing and the Paris Emporium, whose half-washed windows displayed assorted fly-spotted packages of garden-seeds, faded cotton blankets, overalls with metal buckles showing a film of rust, gray hot-water bottles, a tray of tarnished plated-post link-buttons, several bolts of plaid ginghams and two strips of wrinkled fly-paper on one of which a large wasp was buzzing incongruously.

One could see the interior of these houses. . . . The musty bedrooms with their broken rocking-chairs, their chromo-lithographs of Rosa Bonheur's "Horse Fair" on one wall and a water-stained engraving of General Lee's Surrender on the other. The dining-room with tasteless food gulped noisily by people to whom "taste" was an effeminate affectation, its shoddily upholstered chairs with the imitation leather peeling off at the corners, its broken cuckoo clock with its listless pendulum, its plated silver fruit dish standing with a dull dignity and eternal emptiness on a rickety side-board. The parlor with its dirty portières, its green plush sofa from

which the nap had long since been worn, the bright mahogany upright piano, metallically out of tune and the false ebony missing from the lowest C sharp key, the curio cabinet, a nightmare of scrolls with its five shelves of souvenirs, card-board jewel-boxes encrusted with shells, pewter spoons showing a bas-relief view of the Washington monument, a filigree-wire brooch that spelled "Minnie," a Columbian half-dollar mounted in a bezel as a charm, a thick red glass tumbler with the words "Greetings from Sioux City Fair" etched in white. . . .

"And for this," a voice was saying with ghostly shudders, "Davy Crockett tamed the wilderness and Ponce de Leon died to discover the fountain of eternal youth. For this shrine of sodden respectability and standardized negation, Sappho burned, Rome fell and Da Vinci planned his most fantastic dreams!"

It was a girlish figure that spoke. Trig, bright-eyed, poised like a humming bird ready to dart off at a tangent, with a rather sentimental chin and a *batik* blouse, she seemed like a cross between a sublimated sophomore and an enthusiastic catalogue of the Roycrofters Arts and Crafts Association.

"I imagine—er—it must be," I stammered, "surely you are Mrs. Carol Kennicott?"

"How did you know?" she answered, with a ripple

of surprise. "But that doesn't matter. Of course I am. And I'm frightfully glad to see you. When did you come? And can I show you around?"

"Thanks. I'd be delighted. And this is your heaven?"

"Heaven forbid!" she shuddered visibly. "This is the place we transplanted Middle Westerners keep as an Awful Example. We only come here when we are in danger of slipping into our mundane apathy or when we need material for our celestial novels. You see the realistic method has its penalties. Now our real heaven— But do come along and let me show you."

We walked past several greasy cross streets, littered with unshaded "community buildings," tin cans and asthmatic Fords. And then, suddenly—!

". . . and that structure which looks like the Parthenon remodelled by Robert Edmund Jones," she was saying as I emerged from a dazzled unconsciousness, "is Axel Egge's General Music Store with the loveliest assortment of Self-Playing Harps you ever heard. We have two at home. You ought to see Will working the pedals while he runs off 'The Rosary.' That replica of St. Mark's ornamented with busts of Pestalozzi, Dalcroze, Montessori, Froebel and Freud, is the school building erected by the Sacred Seventeen. That large octagonal field, flanked by Ionic columns, is the Isadora Duncan Stadium where we have our weekly meet-

ings of the Y.P.A.A.A.A.—the Young People's Æsthetic and Athletic Association, you know. The baths of Caracalla? Oh, you mean Ezra Stowbody's First Celestial Bank. Impressive, don't you think? That row of Devonshire cottages? We're rather proud of that bit—it is Ye Streete of Lyttle Shoppes, full of quaint things and the loveliest reproductions of real antiques. That vista of Oriental arcades is our parking space for fiery chariots designed by Lee Simonson. The fountain is by Rodin after a sketch by Raymie Witherspoon. That heroic statue of the western world is the work of Paul Darde. He calls it The Pipes of Pan-America. So symbolic, isn't it? And that group of neo-Aztec residences by Frank Wright—"

"Why—hello, Carrie! Didn't know you were out for a stroll. How's tricks to-day—huh?" It was a gruff, kindly voice emanating from a tied-and-dyed toga.

"Oh, Will, how you startled me! I had no idea—oh, allow me to present my husband, Dr. Kennicott."

"Glad t' meet any friend of Carrie's. How're you making out? Been here long? Ain't it a dream of a place? Greatest little spot in all creation, I'll say. Darn artistic, every inch of it and not a plank-walk in miles. Full of up-and-coming people, too. Lewis—you know—the famous author of—what's the name of that book, Carrie, the one you and the Thanatopsis

Club enjoyed so much?—well, he lives here. Wouldn't change, he says, for any place in Heaven. Tried 'em all but he's back here to stay—you can see him most any time floating along the avenue talking to the real estate boys—just plain folks like the rest of 'em. And say, has Carrie shown you our new shack? What? Well, you come right along and—"

"But don't you think," I stammered, "that if I accepted your kind offer—"

"Why, Lord love you, brother, don't worry yourself about that. You just hop along and take pot luck with us. No trouble at all—not by a long shot! We'll shake up a cup of nectar and some boiled ambrosia if there's nothing else. You come right up and— Well, look who's here! If it ain't Juanita Haydock and Rita Simons all dressed up and no place to go. Where you been, ladies? Stand and deliver—an open confession, you know, is good for the soul."

"Oh, it's nothing very improper," giggled Rita, "we've been over to the Bernard Shaw Heaven to hear him read the preface to his latest drama of religion and the race. 'Back to the Protoplasm,' he calls it. An awful bore. Shaw is getting frightfully dull, don't you think? And so sentimental!"

"It isn't his old-fashioned sentiment that I object to," Juanita Haydock contributed in her high cackle, "it does him credit, poor dear. It's his public-school

ideas! I suppose there was a time when the man was amusing, but his trick of stating the obvious in terms of the scandalous (you remember the wicked phrase in *The Tart Set*) is really too provincial."

"That's true," Carol hurriedly assented, "his influence on the Neighborhood Heaven has been anything but the best. It used to be such a lovely, experimental centre for newly-incubated prose poems and plastiques. But ever since he and Dunsany have been helping them put on their bills, there's practically no chance for the younger writer—not that I am in any hurry to see my few things produced (and I would simply *have* to have the right atmosphere)—but it's too bad to see how they are pandering to the most commonplace and conventional tastes."

"Yes!" chimed in Rita, "could anything be more *bourgeois* than 'Reigen' or those other Schnitzler plays they gave last week?"

"Or those hackneyed monodramas by Evreinof," flung out Juanita, "with outmoded settings by Gordon Craig. Next, I suppose they'll trot out a back-number like Reinhardt and have him put on things that have been done to death like Hardy's 'Dynasts.' If it weren't for you, Carol, they'd be trying to foist that sort of half-baked fare on our own Drama League."

"Yes," agreed Rita, "if it weren't for you—"

"I suppose, Mrs. Kennicott," I interrupted, "that you

are the god—I should say the goddess—of this particular Nirvana."

"I—er—"

"She certainly ought to be if she isn't," Carol's henchwomen chorused.

"The fact is," added the doctor, "you've opened up a rather sore topic that's just coming to a head. As things are, there're too many claimants to the so-to-speak throne. 'Course there's no question who's entitled to it. Before Carrie came here, what sort of place was this, anyway? A kidney-colored, slab-sided dump that might have been Paradise to a poor white like Hugh McVey but hopeless for any live, art-loving guys. Beauty, hell! None in a million miles and no one around with enough nerve or gumption to find any. Along comes this little lady, stirs up a lot of old Scandahoofians, puts pep into a bunch of hexes and grinds that only think of getting the world's work done, fills this dried-up burg with a real honest-to-God pride in itself, puts her shoulder to the job and digs in. And to-day— Well-l-l." He waved a proud and comprehensive arm with a gesture that lost a little of its confidence as its sweep met the figure of a tall, lean man with a shambling gait and a long, serious face. "Sorry, McVey, didn't see you coming."

"That's all right," said Hugh. "That's all right."

A lump arose in Hugh's throat and for a moment

he was torn with silence and self-pity. He thought of the old days in heaven before the coming of Carol, and of the old days on earth before the coming of industry, before the time of the mad activities, before the Winesburgs and Picklevilles had grown into the Daytons, the Akrons and all the shrill new towns scattered over the flat lands. He thought of the time when a quiet light used to play over the men and women walking on country roads and moonlit hills, working in the fields, hooking rag rugs, making shoes, believing in a God and dreaming great and serious dreams. From all sides, to-day, he heard the clamor of a swifter age shouting at him in a voice that spoke of huge numbers in a terrible, mechanical definiteness. He witnessed the erection of new systems and movements that were demolished as fast as they were put up. He saw men, massed in some gigantic machine, cutting and grinding their way through other men. He saw the crushed bodies, heard the unuttered cries of the defeated and trampled millions.

"I guess you're right," he said at last, "it's your place, not mine. I ain't fitten for it. It was too much for me down there. And it's too fancy up here. I ain't fitten for it."

"But surely, Mr. McVey," I objected, "you don't intend to renounce your claim so lightly. If you were the presiding Genius of this Heaven, you could easily

invent something that would turn these mean streets into ambling roads as quickly as Mrs. Kennicott has changed them into brisk boulevards."

"Thanks. But it wouldn't be right. I ain't much of a hand at running things. Besides, I promised Clara to get out of politics. I ain't fitten for it. Clara and I are pulling for some one we can understand."

"Which means?"

"Meaning that I'm withdrawing in favor of this lady here." He indicated an olive-colored woman, once handsome, with a flat chest and eyes that wavered between being wistful and determined, a woman who had drifted noiselessly to where they were standing. "I mean Miss Lulu Bett."

The other members of the group gasped. Carol shuddered. "Uh—but dear Lulu doesn't know a thing about city-planning or eugenics or community kitchens or Keats or intensive recreation or how to put on a Morris Dance or Motherhood Endowment or Pageants for the Poor or—"

"Oh, no," Lulu disclaimed. "Of course I don't know anything about such things. I suppose there's lots of other things I'd better know, too. But I *did* see some dances. It was in Savannah. Savannah, Georgia. I don't know the names of all the different dances they did but there were a good many. And they were real pretty."

Never a skilled conversationalist, Lulu paused, conscious of the fact that the topic was not quite exhausted. Then she gulped and went on, "There was a large band playing, too. I don't know how many musicians they had in it, but there were a good many. It was in a big hotel and the room was too crowded. We"—she flushed suddenly—"my first husband and I—I think it was my first husband, although the play and the book the lady wrote about me mixed me up sort of about myself—we were watching the dancing. I was ashamed at first. I started to get up. Then I set down. I made up my mind to see what there was. I said I was going to learn all I could from Savannah, Georgia. I did."

"And is that all you learned?" Carol smiled, not without a thin coating of ice about the question.

"Oh, no," Lulu answered with even more of her usual innocence. "After my second marriage—" she gulped again, turning a dull brick color, "I either married Mr. Cornish who kept music or I re-married Mr. Deacon—the lady got me confused about it and I'm not sure which—well, we came to New York City, New York. We stayed there five days. I liked it. They had some lovely views there and there were a lot of people in the streets all the time. And it was too hot."

"And the result of your metropolitan researches—" Carol proceeded remorselessly.

"Well, we went to a lot of little places to eat. Mostly down in cellars with candles. They had queer names. One of them was like a ship and the waiters were dressed like pirates. It was just like a play. And everybody talked. They didn't do anything. They talked about what you said. About pageants" [Lulu pronounced it "payjunts"] "and the state's babies and why the City Hall should be done over by a—I think they said—Compressionist, and—"

"She's right." This was Felix Fay, a slim young man, careless as to dress and yet both conscious and proud of his carelessness. A shock of insurgent hair and the eyes of a dreamer coming slowly face to face with reality.

"She's right. Main Street or Greenwich Village; it is only a difference of longitude and—in both senses of the word—latitude. You flatter yourselves that you are 'advanced,' that you have acquired social contacts or social consciousness. But what are you, underneath this veneer of culture? Carol, adrift on a rose-water sea of dreams, Hugh stumbling darkly among his own machines—Moon-calves, all of you—even poor Lulu, lost in her childish fantasies. Worst of all, Carol! Crying not only for the moon—you see, even here, the significant symbol—but wailing for a

new earth and a whole new set of constellations! If you really want a god—"

"I suppose, young man, you could suggest the candidate," sneered Dr. Kennicott.

"I could," returned Felix unabashed, "and I will. What we need in this place is air—lots of it—salt breezes to sweep out these musty fantasies. We need a harsher, a more pragmatic realism; a combination, if you can stand it, of Karl Marx, Rabelais and Friedrich Nietzsche."

"And you got the nerve to suggest that you—"

"Not at all," calmly continued Felix, "I propose H. L. Mencken, the wild Webster of the American language."

"Mencken?" gasped the others and "Mencken?" spluttered Kennicott with sudden exasperation, "why —that's impossible. He's too—er—vulgar, he ain't got the right idea at all. He's clever enough—oh, I'll admit that—but when it comes to the things that count, the big things like reverence and uplift and respect for women and civic pride and patriotism, why, he isn't there at all! Besides, what right has he got in a Middle Western Heaven? Ain't he from Baltimore?"

"And if I am," retorted a voice, well oiled with indignation and Pilsner, a voice that emanated from a heavy-set individual who seemed to be a combination of a visiting *privat-docent* and a seraphic butcher-boy,

"what if I am, my masters, originally a citizen of the great Sahara of the South? Did I not bang the drum for every Westerner who lifted himself by sheer mule-power above the run of jackasses and old maids of both sexes? Did I not champion Dreiser's Illinois before he suffered from delusions of grandeur, when any one engaged in such a crusade was howled down and accused of sedition, free love, *héliogabalisme,* obstructing the traffic in cheap fiction, obscenity, loss of critical manhood, moral turpitude, anarchy, inciting to riot and mayhem? Finally, did I not trek through the sodden hinterland to discover Chicago and hail it as America's literary center?"

"But," I interposed, "Mr. Kennicott thinks that your standards might find more appreciative audiences in—er—less sanctified centers than Heaven."

"Bah!" snapped Mencken, "even Brander Matthews would know better than that! What this place needs is a little *force majeure* to free it from its blubbering *Sklavenmoral.* It would be vastly more dignified and downright entertaining if we could get rid of the rumble-bumble of the pious snouters, the gaudy bombast of the malignant moralists, the obtuse and snivelling taradiddle, the absurd hogwallowing, the balderdash, the pishposh, the abracadabra, the hocus-pocus, the blaa-blaa and cavortings of all whoopers and snorters, of the rabble-rousers, bogus rosicrucians,

ku-kluxers, well-greased tear-squeezers, parlor pundits and boob-bumpers.

"The quackery, hugger-mugger idealism, and bumptiousness of a so-called democratic heaven is pathetic. Worse, it is grotesque. In the course of a mere score of years we have been lamentably intrigued by a dozen messianic delusions; we have allowed ourselves to be caressed impartially and in turn by the shibboleths of Tolstoy, Pastor Wagner, Drs. Palladino, Maeterlinck, Metchnikoff, Bergson, the Emanuel Movement, Eucken, Veblen, Dalcroze, Isadora Duncan, Tagore, Freud and half a hundred other visiting boudoir-swamis, studio-psychics, jitney messiahs. . . . We are constantly being bussed and bemused by the hopelessly mediocre. We have a prodigious appetite to be fooled, tricked, bamboozled and double-crossed, in short, to be ignominiously but thoroughly hornswoggled. Hence, we swallow, with unconcealed gusto, the pious garglings of the Sunday afternoon sentimentalists, the windy platitudes and hollow stuff of any gaudy romanticism as long as it is soothing. Hence, the local peasantry grows more and more inclined to the cackle and clowning of every cheap-jack, punchinello, mountebank and booby, and hence sinks in its own soughs of booming and asinine fol-de-rol. The boobery has a positive genius for scorning whatever is genuine or first-rate. It holds beauty to be unbusi-

ness-like, decorative, distracting and hence immoral; its anæsthesia to the arts is invariably one hundred percent. It is as unintelligent as a senator or a boy-orator fresh from the chautauquas; it is the chief actor in a bawdy farce, a *seborrhea* on the face of Nature, a gawky villager who sees Love only as the divine *Shadchen,* a tragic dill-pickle, a snitcher, a smut-hound, in brief, an ass. Consider the way it has consistently lauded the adenoidal tenors of American literature and has shut the door in the faces of such rare but indubitable genii as Poe, Hearn, Whitman and the serious side of—God save the Mark!—Twain. Consider the reception accorded Dreiser's 'Sister Carrie.' Or Norris's 'McTeague.' Or Conrad's 'Heart of Darkness.' Or Sandburg's 'Chicago Poems.' The thing is incredible, stupendous, fantastic, *unglaublich,* gargantuan, *kolossal*—but nevertheless true."

"And what," Kennicott rejoined with more than the suspicion of a sneer, "are you going to do about it?"

"First," replied Mencken, "I shall pay a visit to the presiding *Stammvater* and lay before him my plans for draining the body politic of its virulent *glycosuria.* Next I will broach—somewhat gingerly—a scheme to plough through the ranks, and weed out all those who suffer from comstockery, megalomania, right-thinking, the itch-to-reform, chemical purity, belief in the soul or share, in any way, the bovine honor and complacency

of the herd. I have various suggestions as to a sweet and soulful euthanasia. I, myself, once proposed wholesale lynchings, volunteering to string up half the community of a small town in Maryland at the local opera house and sell tickets to the other half at five dollars *per capita*. It promised to be a profitable venture and a good show. . . . I throw out the suggestion and pass on. Next, I will exhibit a machine, designed by myself and Bernard Shaw out of Nietzsche, which will effectually apply the slapstick to the posterior elevation of poets, *cabots*, Shakespearian cuties, Southerners and other such pretty fellows and, as the late General Grant has it somewhere, give them a kick in the *kishgiss*. For one thing, I will make everybody listen to daily concerts confined to the quartets of Papa Haydn, the *lieder* of Richard Strauss, the nine symphonies of the immortal Ludwig. For another, I will show them that Man, for all his flashy chivalry which invariably bites in the clinches, is capable of appreciating fine letters, the sensuous ebb and flow of syllables, the beautiful if polygamous marriage of nouns and adjectives, verbs, adverbs, prepositions, pronouns, exclamations, articles, participles, infinitives, possessives, conjunctions. I will read them the files of *The Smart Set* and strike a responsive chord of E♭ major in the dumb breasts of janitors, soda-clerks, *mouzhiks*, Methodists, book-salesmen, officers of the

Elks and duly elected members of the House of Representatives. Even the college professors will feel a stir of life. I do not say that I can pump up sufficient energy to destroy, at one blow, all the malaises and bugaboos that inhibit these provinces. I do say that, once my campaign is in full swing, I will tear off the tin halos and false whiskers of the Puritan—"

He got no further. The last word seemed to inflame his listeners with amazing vigor. Although a unanimity of opinion was evident, each one was so eager to pay his tribute of invectives that the air thickened with fragments like . . . "glib dunderheads" . . . "pious hypocrites" . . . "You've got a Puritan complex yourself." . . . "filthy and blackmailing crusaders—God save us all!" . . . "drown them in cold tea—in Puritannic acid!" . . . "Consider, also . . ." . . . "To the Puritan all things are impure!"

The crowd was growing larger, the exclamations louder. Mencken, banging a bass-drum which he had hidden beneath his overcoat, began whistling the *Marche des "Davidsbündler" contre les Philistins.* Carol Kennicott and Felix Fay unfurled banners with screaming slogans while Hugh McVey tore off his jacket to display a flaming red undershirt. A shot was fired —then others. Possibly, they were blank cartridges; but I was taking no chances. "If this is Heaven," I gasped to my companion, "give me—"

But my mentor had vanished. My heart lost several beats before I saw him. He was slipping out the back-door. I agreed with him. He was an excellent guide.

A Note on Previewing

A PREVIEW is, as its name implies, the opposite of a review. It is, in short, an anticipatory consideration of an (as yet) uncreated piece of work. A review is, by the very necessity of its prefix, a backward glance over tilled fields; the preview, gazing ahead at still unbroken soil, is essentially far more forward-looking.

Previewing, in spite of its possibilities, has had few practitioners. And this is strange, for its advantages are obvious. For one thing, no one can accuse the previewer of being a merely destructive critic; his creation is implicit in his criticism. For another thing, he never need skim the publisher's note or the first chapters of a book before formulating his theories of the volume—he need not even confine himself to the printed page; his range of interest is not cribbed, cabined or confined by anything but the limits of his imagination. A further advantage is the previewer's freedom from any code or canon of critical conduct. He need fear neither ethical indiscretions or legal libels; the unwritten word is his unwritten law.

What a library these unwritten books would make! No previewer's astral shelves would be complete with-

out George Moore's privately conceived and privately printed version of *Paul and Virginia,* G. K. Chesterton's religious romance of a billiard-room called *The Ball and the Cue,* an anthology of *The World's Worst Poetry,* edited by H. L. Mencken, a collection of angry reactionary essays on liberalism by Paul Elmer More, entitled *New Republicans and Sinners,* an exhaustive appreciation, *The Art of David Belasco* by the denunciatory George Jean Nathan, *What I Owe Henry* by Fanny Hurst, *President Harding* by Lytton Strachey. . . . An ardent previewer, by the very force of his feelings and the intensity of his forecasts, may actually will such books into being. It is in the hope of stimulating such effort—of quickening, as it were, this stunted branch of literature—that the following five previews are presented without further protest or preamble.

WOODROVIAN POETRY [1]

It was a happy though somewhat belated thought to bring together the eighteen poets here assembled and to present their latest work not only as a revelation to the new world but as a challenge to the old. Obviously taking its cue from the various anthologies that have been coming over from England and, more directly, from The Lloyd-Georgians (the left wing secession of a group well-known in the late 'teens), this volume aims to do for contemporary Americans what has already been done for our transatlantic cousins. But the anonymous editor is far more catholic. He writes, in his Prefatory Note, "The object of *Woodrovian Poetry* is to give, first, a survey of the work written in the last two years by some of our more authoritative poets; second, to show, by its very differences in taste, form, temper and subjects, the variegated vigor of the most athletic of our arts." The editor's catholicity is illustrated more sharply by his inclusions. Thus Theodosia Garrison appears alphabetically between Robert Frost and Orrick Johns. The

[1] *Woodrovian Poetry.* A Biennial. Washington, D. C. The Printers', Proofreaders' and Publishers' Soviet; Branch 16.

easy-selling patterns of Berton Braley follow the three involuted tone-poems by Conrad Aiken and precede the cloisonné fantasies of Maxwell Bodenheim. "It is not intended," argues the editor, "to place emphasis on any particular group or tendency. On the contrary, if an honest appraisal of national culture is desired, one must receive the popular with the same enthusiasm that, in these times, one extends to the bizarre; the contributors to *The Saturday Evening Post* are surely no less representative or racy than those of *The Littlest Review.*"

The volume itself is, as might be expected, a strange medley of achievement and mere effort; it is by turns "different" and indifferent. Turn to the twenty pages allotted to Vachel Lindsay. The first four poems are in his most metallic and moralizing vein; I doubt whether he has ever written anything less worthy of print and paper than "The Poison Weed" which is dedicated to The Springfield Chapter of the Anti-Tobacco League. But the other pages give us this lusty singer in his best and most whimsical voice. His rollicking Afro-American version of The Song of Songs entitled "The Shimmying Shulamite" is only surpassed by that highly-colored chant which concludes his group, "The Noah's Ark Blues." This poem contains Lindsay's three R's, his own blend of Rhyme, Ragtime and Religion. But a new ingredient is added—a restraint

that gives these lines the fire of a cause and the inevitability of a nursery-rhyme. The mechanics are even simpler than those of "The Congo." Obviously inspired by a trip to Coney Island with The Russian Ballet, it begins with variations on the old jingle:—

> The animals went in two by two,
> (*Good-bye, my lover, good-bye.*)
> The camel, the cat and the kangaroo;
> (*Good-bye, my lover, good-bye.*)

But the first section, with its broadly humorous catalog, is followed by a wilder and more fanciful flight. In this part, the souls of the animals reveal themselves and, in Lindsay's not too subtle symbolism, become identified with their human prototypes. It is a glorious *mélange* of color, motion and metaphysics. The snake's hiss makes a pattern that is crossed by the lion's roar; the Chinese nightingales cry with a barbaric sweetness against a background of twittering and purring.

> And hiss, sang the cobras,
> Hiss . . . hisss . . . hissss. . . .
> The craven-hearted gander surprised the salamander
> By turning round and hissing in a dozen different keys.
> *Hiss. . . . Hisss. . . . Hissss. . . .*
> The polar-bears, the bisons, the buffaloes and bees

Began a mighty bumbling,
And roaring and rumbling,
And fumbling and snoring,
And eagles, tired of soaring,
Came tumbling to their knees.
Rrrrrrrr. . . . *Hisss*. . . . Rrrrrrrr. . . .

The end of the poem is even more surprising. The apotheosis comes suddenly in the very midst of this lyric turbulence; a glorification that turns the clangor to a burst of ecstasy.

Through the honied heavens I could see them drive
All the buzzing planets to a golden hive;
Bees and bears among the stars were burning constellations,
Lighting up the jungles and the new-born nations.
Every swooping eagle was a flaming sun,
Shining like a hero when the fight is won . . .
And, above the ramparts of The Holy Wall,
The White Dove of Beauty shone upon them all.

Miss Lowell's contributions are even more uneven in quality. Craftsmen will undoubtedly be interested in her experiments in post-Eurasian monorhymes, but the unprofessional poetry-lover will find little to excite him in these metronomic rhythms. Similarly puzzling is her interpretation of Prokofieff's Grotesque for Two Bassoons, Concertina and Snare-drums which Miss Lowell has rendered "in the high-pitched timbre of

the neo-Javanese." It is not always easy to follow such intricately embroidered lines as:

> A sulphur-yellow chord of the eleventh
> Twitches aside the counterpane.
> Blasts of a dead chrysanthemum,
> Blur.
> Whispers of mauve in a sow's ear;
> Snort of a daffodil,
> Bluster of zinnias hurtling through nasal silences,
> Steeplejack in a lace cassock
> Pirouetting before a fly-blown moon.
> Soap-bubble groans where the wheezing planets
> Abandon the jig.

But Miss Lowell is not always so cryptic. The six short poems in contrapolyphonic verprose (grouped under the appropriate title "Mice and Mandragora") are brilliant examples of her staccato idiom. I quote the first of these.

WALLFLOWER TO A MOONBEAM

> In the pause
> When you first came
> The stillness rang with the clashing of wine-cups.
> You spoke—
> And jonquil-trumpets blew dizzy bacchanals.
> You smiled—
> And drunken laughter
> Spilled over the edges of the gauffered night.

Now you have gone,
The dusk has lost its sparkle;
My days are trickling water,
Tepid and tasteless.
But I am no longer thirsty.

Most of the other poets seem to be marking time. James Oppenheim's extended "Psalm for the New Cosmos" gives one the same impression that we have already received from his later work—a vision of Jehovah taking lessons in psychoanalysis from Walt Whitman. These are the first notes of the opening chorus:

Yes, I say, to the dance of the stars!
Yes to the sexual warmth of our mother, the sun;
Yes, I shout, to the many-voiced longing which is life;
Yes, I declare, to Creation!
Who shall publish the dark heart of Chaos,
And lay bare the secrets of Night?

Edgar Lee Masters's noble "Ode to Prohibition" (dedicated to William Jennings Bryan) has all this author's early fire but it is marred in places by the hortatory enthusiasm of the recent convert. William Rose Benét continues to commute between Hell Gate and Helicon on his four-cylinder unicorn. Willard Wattles of Kansas is a welcome addition (alphabeti-

cally, at least) to the line of famous W. W.'s that includes William Wordsworth, Walt Whitman, William Watson and Woodrow Wilson. Theodosia Garrison's lyrics still read as if they were composed on an automatic cash-register. Mr. Braley, it is evident, has availed himself of the Improved Graphomotor attachment for Tired Typewriters. E. A. Robinson, having exhausted the Arthurian legends, has gone back to the fall of Troy. Louis Untermeyer is still loudly and repetitively amazed at the liveliness of life, and John Hall Wheelock is still musically enchanted with the loveliness of death.

Carl Sandburg is the only one of the sixteen who, while retaining his own voice, has added some unsuspected quality to it. Few of his poems will rank higher than his "Nine Pieces from Sappho" which Sandburg has rendered into modern Chicago speech. Not since Wharton's collection, has any one done so much to revitalize what Palgrave called "the sweet lament of Lesbian love." Sandburg avoids the pitfalls of sentimentality which trapped Merivale and Symonds; Sappho, in his versions, is as throbbing and breathless as any girl late for her appointment on State Street. Particularly characteristic is his treatment of the second ode in Sapphic metre, the one which is even better known in Catullus's imitation. This is Sandburg's rendition:

I'm telling you.
That man who trails along with you
Is better off than the governor of Idaho.
He sits close
And hears you laughing—a giggler, God knows, a giggler—
And his troubles are as gone as yesterday,
And the past is a scuttle of cinders.

That's what I hanker after.
But when I get one slant at you,
I can't speak.
Dust gets in my throat;
My tongue breaks down in jabberings;
The flame in my right wrist and the fires in my left wrist run along my arms and legs.
My ears ring; I go blind; drops come out on my forehead; I shake all over. I'm afraid of going nuts.

Get this.
I want to chance everything.
I want to say there's a place out here with potato-blossoms and young frogs calling and nobody home but a red sun spilling hallelujahs over the prairie.
I want to dance and sing: Shine All Over God's Heaven.
But something chokes me.
I can't act like I used to.
I go yellow as grass when there's no rain in July;
All in . . . ab-so-lute-ly all in . . . no use, boy, no use.
I'm telling you.

It is difficult to understand why Robert Frost is represented by only one poem, and that one ("The Dried-up Spring") obviously a product of his middle or Franconian period. Perhaps it is because of Frost's distrust of groups—particularly his own. Or perhaps he himself is the anonymous editor. Whatever the reason, and in spite of other omissions (the air around Washington Square will be a violent cobalt with the indignations of Alfred Kreymborg's adherents!), the collection will take its place as one of the fifty-seven "unique and notable books of the year." In its chaste binding of red, white and blue, it should appeal to both the intelligent student of native art and the reader of the editorials of the New York *Times*. Whatever else the Woodrovian era has lost, it has found its singers.

THE MANUFACTURE OF VERSE[1]

It was bound to come. And here, a solid four hundred and fifty page royal octavo, it is. Professor Harper Grenville's calmly-entitled *The Manufacture of Verse* is not so much a book as it is a calculated literary explosion; an astounding combination of manual, pattern-maker and hand-book containing Two Hundred Secrets of The Trade. Professor Grenville, who has returned after a sojourn in these nitid states to his chair at Monrovia University, begins with an ingenuous foreword in which he submits the proposition, revolutionary in its simplicity, that. . . . But let him speak for himself.

"Before returning to Africa," begins the professor, "I spent four sabbatical years reading the poetry in every magazine from *The Atlantic Monthly* to *The Ginger Jar;* attending (so far as geography would permit) every meeting of every Poetry Society; studying, in short, the entire problem of supply and demand in

[1] *The Manufacture of Verse;* including a Preface on Weights and Measures, a Rhyming Dictionary for *Vers Librists*, and a Three Weeks' Course for Beginners. By Harper Grenville, Litt.D., Monrovia, Liberia. Printed by the Author.

what, as far as America is concerned, has grown to be not only a major occupation but an essential industry. And I was struck, first of all, by the shocking inefficiency and waste in the manufacture as well as in the marketing of this staple product. What surprised me most was the utterly unsystematic method of assembling, the useless duplication, the uncoördinated and almost unconscious similarity. Surely a country run by time-clocks, Babson reports, memory courses, conservation committees and the Taylor System must realize that its poetry cannot be allowed to lag behind in the old haphazard, 'write-as-the-mood-seizes-you' gait! Something is needed for the double purpose of standardizing quality and speeding up production. It is in the hope of filling this only too evident need that the following chapters have been prepared."

Thus Professor Grenville's stark little prologue. Without pausing for breath, he goes into action on the first page of the first chapter, which deals with Magazine Verse and is brusquely entitled *At the Usual Rate per Line.*

"It is not too late, even in an age of conquering ideals," he begins, "to be realistic. For better or for worse, the magazine sonnet, the rotund meditation, the sentimental fillers exist. What is more, they persist. There is a market for these wares; they live because people like them, because there is a genuine demand

for such merchandise. Obviously, our duty is to show how to meet that demand without the fumblings and faint strivings for originality that have characterized the past." Whereupon the Professor begins to catalog, to codify, to quote. Great names are thrown about with a magnificent nonchalance; nobody escapes. The present reviewer wishes he had space to reprint Professor Grenville's analysis of "that cornerstone of journalistic prosody, The Lush and Rhetorical Sonnet," regretting that the readers must content themselves with the learned doctor's conclusions.

"The fourteenth line" [I am detaching a segment from page 21] "should always be written first; the first line next. The rest is mere stuffing. Of late there has been a tendency to build sonnets around the third or fourth line, on the theory that editors never get as far as the last line. This is an innovation which, in spite of its plausibility, I must condemn. For one thing, it tends to deviate from that conformity which, as I have pointed out, is the very goal at which we are aiming. Nothing should be done to disturb the liquid flow of a thought that begins nowhere and, after meandering through fourteen well-worn grooves, ends there. Vague abstractions and vaguer 'wings that beat,' 'silvern melodies,' alliterative generalities and archaic embellishments like 'I wis,' 'hark,' 'fain,' etc., will go far to fill in the gap between the first phrase of the octave

and the last rhyme of the sestet. Here, by Clinton Scollard, is an almost perfect example:

AT THE VERGE OF MARCH

It is not ever that the outer ear
  Bears us the joy for which our hearts are fain;
  Sometimes we sense the music of the rain
Ere its first silvern melody we hear.
Sometimes we feel the grieving sea is near
  Before we hark its never silent strain;
  Sometimes we mark the veering of the vane
Ere the wind-trumpets sound their clamour clear.

So now I am inscrutably aware
  Of moving wings that beat against the day,
  Of swift migrations stirring from afar;
The clouds betray strange murmurings in the air,
  Breathings seep up from out the frozen clay,
  And there are whisperings from the twilight star.

"But," continues our guide, "there is another type of sonnet which requires less care and which yields even more gratifying results. And that is the Mouth-Filling and Mystic Sonnet. During the war there was a noticeable slump in these goods but, with the increased popularity of spiritualism, they have risen steadily in favor. They can be manufactured in quantity with the aid of the ordinary, domestic ouija board. Or, if a slower but somewhat more satisfactory

method is desired, they can be turned out in this fashion: Collect and arrange a score of hyper-literary, resounding and (preferably) obsolete words—words like 'nenuphar,' 'thrid,' 'levin,' 'rathe,' 'immemorial,' 'palimpsest.' Scatter these through the pattern, leaving space for rhymes. Use any good dictionary and season to suit. An almost endless variety can thus be produced, of which the following is a sample—a composite of twenty-three different variations of this popular model:

RESURGAM

Athwart the hectic sunset's plangent crown,
The rathe and daedal moon is vaguely seen;
The ghosts of twilight strow the skies with green
And listlessly the evening sinks adown.
The driven day forgets its furrowed frown
And shimmers in the frail and xanthic sheen;
Life's banners ope'—the shades porphyrogene,
Dank and disheveled, clutch the night—and drown. . . .

So did I once behold Love's gyving spells
Flashing from amaranthine star to star;
While, from the limbo of forgotten hells,
The immarcescible passions surged afar. . . .
What fulgid lure awoke the asphodels?
Behind the gibbering night—what avatar?"

I skip, with ill-concealed impatience, to page 425 and Professor Grenville's instructive remarks on *Capi-*

talizing Beauty with a Capital B. "What is more gratifying to the modern reader, harassed by machinery and newspaper editorials, than a thumping glorification of the past? By that I do not mean the recent past, which has been dealt with in a previous chapter and which finds its climactic *cri de cœur* in refrains like:

> *And it's oh for the hills of Ida, and the sigh of the Zuyder Zee!*

"I refer to the sonorous stanzas which, with a delightful ambiguity, mingle epochs, geography, and historical land-marks in a list of confused but dazzling splendor. It is unnecessary to analyze or even define this impressive type. Every student acquainted with the rudiments of scientific management and machine piece-work will be able to construct love-poems as resonant, high-pitched and purple-patched as this free-hand improvisation:

THE PAGAN HEART

Here, in Egyptian night, you hang
  Above me, sphinx without a home;
Whiter than Helen as she sang
  And burned the golden isles of Rome.

The breath of perfumed Sidon slips
From your Greek body's wizardry;
Persepolis is on your lips,
And your bright hair is Nineveh.

Enchantress, you have drawn upon
The world's dream and its old desire—
The brazen pomps of Babylon,
The purple panoply of Tyre!"

It is impossible to give the fine flavour of this volume by meagre quotations. It is equally impossible to quote it *in toto*. And yet one cannot resist tearing a fragment from Professor Grenville's advice concerning *The English Lyric*. "By the *English* lyric, I mean that type of song which (in contradistinction to that written in the American idiom) is sought after chiefly in the United States. Whether the pattern is vernal (see *Spring Style No. 53*) or merely rustic and ruminative (vide *Songs of the Open Road,* designs 62 to 225), all one needs is a small but select vocabulary ready for substitution. The proper air is given and the effect achieved by changing the common American blackbird to the poetically Georgian 'merle,' the lark to the 'laverock,' song-thrush to 'mavis,' wood to 'wold,' and liberally strewing the rest of any outdoor jingle (see passages on *Wanderlust, Broad-Highway, Vagbondia,* etc.) with references to 'gorse,' 'heather,'

'furze,' 'whin,' and so on. . . . The following introductory stanzas are an approximation of this standard and always effective design:

LAVEROCKS

The winter sun has run its wavering course,
The giddy mavis tries its vernal wing;
While from the green heart of the radiant gorse
The laverocks sing.

High on the moor the blossomy heather wakes
The gillyflower laughing in the furze;
And, in the bramble thickets and the brakes,
Old magic stirs.

Ah, love, could we but once more be a part
Of May! In tune with bracken and with ling!
Then, from the flaming thickets of my heart,
Laverocks would sing!"

It would be a pleasure to go all the way with Professor Grenville. But that pleasure must be reserved for the student, the apprentice, and the eight-hour-day versifiers rather than the casual reader. There are times when the author, especially in his efforts to reduce the number of easy-selling models, grows a trifle doctrinaire; there are other times when one almost suspects him of letting his tongue slip toward his cheek, as when, in the passage on *How to Achieve Glamour,*

he writes: "Inversion is the surest method; the further away one gets from the spoken language, the nearer one is to that mode of stilted speech which even the comic weeklies recognize as poetry—a masterpiece of its kind being the first two lines of a poem by Mr. Louis V. Ledoux:

> 'A moonlit mist the valley fills,
> Though rides unseen herself the moon.' "

In spite of the few flies in Professor Grenville's preparation of the "divine emollient," one—and I dare say, a great many more—must be grateful to him. Such chapters as *Rhyme Without Reason, Archaism's Artful Aid, Home-Grown Exotics,* will do much to help the latter-day minstrel up the slopes of Parnassus in high.

The Manufacture of Verse is, in every sense, a profitable book. At least, it ought to be.

THE LOWEST FORM OF WIT[1]

THIS curious volume, in which we meet with so many old friends that it is as if we had suddenly entered our second childhood, is—let me be brutally candid—a disappointment. It is, as all admirers of Dr. Thyme would expect, a good book. But it could have been a great one. The eminent psychoanalytical *litterateur* was about to plumb strange and fascinating depths. He explored the entrance, noted (with somewhat too scrupulous detail) the surrounding territory and began to descend. And then something happened. The search, so brilliantly begun, was abandoned for a series of divagations, circuitous by-paths, pleasant but unprofitable excursions into the familiar. Briefly, what happened was this: the researcher became lost in his own labyrinth; the critic yielded to the compiler. The last half of Dr. Thyme's thesis (devoted to five hundred classic and modern puns) is a lamentable falling-off from the dazzling promise of his early chapters. And this is more than a pity; it is a kind of

[1] *The Pun, Its Principles, Possibilities, and Purposes;* with 500 examples of this Popular Pastime. By Justin Thyme, M.A. Scribbler & Bros., Boston.

literary tragedy. For we have not yet been given—and we badly need—what this book pretends to be: a careful and complete analysis of the pun, its principles, its purpose, its possibilities.

No one disputes the definition: "Punning is the lowest form of wit." The axiom is universally applauded, quoted and upheld. The scorn of the pun is common in every civilized country and—at least so it seems to the addicts of this easily acquired habit—astonishingly vindictive. And why? The reasons are various; every critical consultant will give you equally valid (and equally contradictory) explanations. H. L. Mencken will assure you that the hatred of punning lies in man's inherent Puritanism. He will discover for you that the *booboisie* as well as the vice-crusaders, smut-hounds, snitchers and members of the B.P.O.E., scent something pleasurable in the practise and hence abhor in public what they enjoy in private. He will convince you that a race which is anæsthetic to art or beauty in any form has forced itself to erect taboos against this form of innocent gratification until it has become a refuge of the cheap-jacks, punchinellos, chautauquans, drummers and senators; a gaudy and hollow laugh-provoking device. . . . Upton Sinclair will tell you, with great heat and even greater detail, that the low state to which the pun has fallen is due to the machinations of the capitalist press. Sin-

clair will show that punning, one of the few privileges of the labor class, has been reviled, ridiculed and lied about by a conspiracy of paid professors, city editors and rewrite men. He will tell, as proof of his charges, how a pun of his, after being quoted in the afternoon edition of the *New York Evening Post,* was dropped in subsequent editions and never printed elsewhere, the Associated Press refusing to carry the story or answer his letters. . . . Dr. Sigmund Freud will explain the aversion to the pun by referring you to his tome on *Wit and Its Relation to the Unconscious;* establishing the dark nature of the pleasure mechanism, the hidden psychogenesis of humour and the unsuspected nature of the *Lach-effekt.* Reinforced by Ueberhorst's *Das Komische,* the analyst will show that the desire to pun is basically sexual, a form of exhibitionism and that, therefore, the moral censor continually tries to repress the impulse. He will proceed to show how that repression, deepened by the punster's consequent inferiority complex, has been responsible for many delusions and neuroses. . . . And so on, down the list of critics, interpreters and other antagonists.

But no one has ever gone—or thought of going—to the source. Now I, for instance, am an inveterate punster. I know the causes. And, having been shocked at the violence with which these inoffensive plays on words are received, I have evolved a theory

or, to be finickingly precise, a set of theories about this diversion and its overwhelming unpopularity.

(1) *Punning is the most unsportsmanlike of indoor exercises.* It is a game that can only be played by one. Therefore the others, who cannot join, begin by hating the solo player's jocular (should it be "jugular?") vein and end by wishing to tear him limb from lymph. It is a truism that no one ever enjoys any one's puns but his own. The exception which proves the rule is G. K. Chesterton. But Chesterton leads up to his puns so gradually, so patiently prepares the dullest reader for his most brilliant explosion that, by the time the piece is set off, the reader, anticipating the detonation, has acquired almost a proprietary interest and actually feels the pun is, with a little help from Chesterton, his own.

(2) *Punning is an illicit form of verse.* K. Fisher says "a pun does not play with the word as a word, but merely as a sound." In its effort to find similarities of vowels and differences in consonants, it is a species of rhyme. Therefore those who dislike the very suggestion of poetry (approximately 99 9/10% of the race) bear the pun an added grudge.

(3) *Punning is a parade of mental superiority.* Every word has a string of connotations, overtones, associations. As soon as *A* and *B,* two intellectually alert persons, hear a sentence, their brains begin work-

ing (half consciously) among the possibilities presented. While *B*, the less flexible mind, is still groping among the verbal reflexes, *A* triumphantly releases his bolt and confronts *B* with his (*B's*) lethargic and generally inferior mind. Hence *B* (representing the majority of mankind) hates all that *A* stands for.

(4) *Punning is a coarse commentary on . . .* But let me discard the categoric and impersonal. This preview is, after all, not so much a general inquiry as a fiercely personal outcry. I am, I confess, a passionate punster. I cannot hear a phrase without desiring to turn it upside down; twist it about; wring its neck, if necessary. Can I change the habit of a lifetime? Do I want to? Even in solitude, I think of queer verbal acrobatics; my system is a hot-bed of unassimilated *jeux d'esprits*. How am I going to get rid of them? What am I going to do about it?

There is the pun that came to me in—of all places for intellectual athletics!—a book-store. I was thinking about the derivative American composers—the Loefflers, Carpenters, *et al*—who keep poking and prying in modern French music. I want to call them American Debussybodies. But do I dare?

There is the *mot* in connection with a roulade of beef prepared by a famous chef for a catered dinner. The Irish waitress refuses to serve it because she favours *Home Roulade*. I shall never use that one.

There is the temptation concerning the native author of "Betelguese." This American epic, subtitled "A Trip Through Hell," is written in a sort of homespun *terza rima*. I want to call the author "A Yankee Doodle Dante." But I have not the courage.

There is the opportunity that presented itself in the summer camp of R——, the composer. I held that all nature-sounds not only were musical but had a tonal structure and definite form. He denied it. "And what," he mocked as our controversy was interrupted by the baying of our neighbor's hounds, "what sort of musical composition would you call that?" It was on the tip of my tongue to reply, "A Barkarolle." But, valuing his friendship, I restrained myself.

For some time I have wanted to speak of Beardsley's "Pierroticism." I want to refer to Wilde's mechanically clever dialogues as "scratchy records played on a creaking epigramophone." I want to dismiss the grotesque, heavy-footed imitations of Poe as "elephantastic." I want to brand Trotzky's idea of teaching the young socialists how to shoot as "a poor piece of Marxmanship." . . . And yet I never will.

Then there is the *tour de force* concerning. . . . But you are not listening. You have already turned away from my still-born puns. I understand. You are thinking of one of your own.

VERSED AID TO THE INJURED[1]

HARPER GRENVILLE, Litt.D., of Monrovia, Liberia, has done it again. The efficiency expert of modern poetry whose *The Manufacture of Verse* caused such a technical sensation a year ago, has evolved some new and even more startling methods for "standardizing and speeding up production of this staple item." This time Professor Grenville turns directly to the unpublished versifier and, scorning such antique affectations as mood, inspiration and even talent, addresses himself to "those who, unable to find an audience or a publisher, feel naturally insulted and injured." *A Manual of Versed Aid, or How to Become A Practising Poet in Seven Lessons,* begins without preamble:

"Often, dear reader, you have been asked (or have asked yourself) why shouldn't every one write poetry? And by that you meant not unofficial, amateur and personal poetry but public or publishable verse. The answer is absurdly simple. Every one should—any one can. To become a successful contributor to maga-

[1] *A Manual of Versed Aid;* with Helpful Hints for the Young Poet. By Harper Grenville, Litt.D. Privately printed.

zines as divergent and 'leading' as *Terrible Tales* and *Home and Hearthside,* all one needs is (1) the desire to write and (2) patience—and not very much of the latter. The desire to write (and, I should add, a casual study of the chapters on Fixed Forms and Pattern-Making) is paramount and this Manual is designed to give aid to those who have, as yet, no technique, ideas, craftsmanship, emotions, purpose or any power beyond that desire."

Whereupon Professor Grenville, after a somewhat too detailed consideration of the profits to be derived from following his System of Simplification, introduces the unlettered as well as the *literati* to the first formula which he explains thus succinctly: "Nothing is more likely to prevent the salability of your work than the practise of writing poetry by ear. I cannot stress too strongly the danger of this habit which often leads to a perverse way of stating things, a clumsy differentiation which is commonly called originality. I would advise precisely the opposite method: Poetry by Eye. Do not let yourself listen for novel chords and unusual cadences, but observe closely the shape and structure of as much magazine verse as you can read. Then begin and write your verses as close as possible to your models. I would suggest starting with a Spring Song. Here is the opening stanza of one—the first

effort of a student who had never written anything but insurance—which is worthy of study.

> The skies have lost their wintry gray,
> In every tree the robins sing;
> Children and lambs unite to play;
> All Nature wakes and it is Spring.

"This, I submit, is practically perfect. There is not a phrase here but is as recognizable and classic as a familiar melody. One knows it by heart as soon as it is read; one can actually whistle it upon the third repetition. But what is even more to the point is the solidity of its structure. Every clause fits into place so neatly that the lines can be read in any order without marring the music or the meaning. The verse is just as effective if the penultimate line is followed by the first, if the second couplet precedes the initial one or—as a final triumphant test—if the entire quatrain is begun backward, letting the lines follow haphazardly. Thus:

> All Nature wakes and it is Spring.
> Children and lambs unite to play;
> The skies have lost their wintry gray;
> In every tree the robins sing!

"This," says the canny instructor, "is the secret: keep to the perennial and expected essentials." And

in the following chapter on Occasional Sonnets the poetic pedagogue reveals an even sharper and more condensed simplification. "To be able to take a poem apart and put it together in any combination of lines is the first step. But," he continues, "it is not enough. Study the ever-popular sonnet—especially the Memorial or Anniversary Sonnet—as an example. There is a steady demand for this article which, with a little diligence, can be supplied in quantity. The Composite Method is one which makes the production of this pattern fairly easy. But there is an even less tiresome system which I have found to yield still better results. And that is this: Take the inevitable phrase *'O thou* as the impetus and starting point of your sonnet, choose a series of dictionary rhymes, place a word or two to suggest the thought at the beginning of each line—and fill in the gaps at your leisure. It is surprising how many variations can be written around such a framework as:

TO ——

O thou .....birth
Great .....land,
Stern .....command
Wisdom .....mirth.
Noble .....worth,
Future .....planned,
All men .....understand
Throughout .....earth.

Inscrutably .....designed,
Glorious .....sea to sea;
Foes .....blind
Nations .....free—
Lover .....mankind,
Thy fame .....eternity.

"Another and even speedier mode of composition," remarks the professor in the section devoted to Nocturnes and Lullabies, "is to dispense with all words except the final one in each line. Thousands of slumber-songs have been written by beginning only with the indispensable monosyllable *'Rest,'* jotting down a set of blank lines and letting the rhymes write themselves. The possibilities—and permutations—in these skeleton structures are unlimited. An example:

SUNSET CROON

.....dies,
.....west,
.....skies,
Rest.

.....calls,
.....nest;
.....falls.
Rest.

.....alarms,
.....breast;
.....arms,
Rest.

.....love;
.....best.
.....above—
Rest."

It would be a service to consider Professor Grenville's book in microscopic detail; there is not a dull or (in every sense of the word) unprofitable paragraph in his 250 pages. But such a consideration would degenerate into a series of quotations punctuated by nothing more critical than applause. And yet the temptation to quote is too strong to resist—particularly when one reaches a section in the chapter on The Diminutive Lyric. "This type of lyric," proceeds this commercial counsellor, "is continually being called for, especially by the more determinedly feminine magazines. Its chief characteristics are a clinging and cloying tenderness (which, under no circumstance, must be allowed to become genuinely poignant), a wistful sentiment that is only distantly acquainted with passion and a plentiful use of the word 'little' and its connotations. An added value is attained by giving the last line a fillip, a light twist in the O. Henry manner (some

RHYME AND RELATIVITY [1]

In spite of the seriousness with which this collection has been received, we cannot relinquish our suspicion that the entire book is a hoax. Not even Mr. Breathweight's succinct and chiselled sentences can deceive us. We are still skeptical when this hardy and perennial anthologist writes: "Up to the last six months it is apparent that none of the American poets have realized how large a part Einstein and the entire matter of Relativity were playing in their lives, and although we may cling empirically to the tradition that artistic standards must be imported, forgetting that the proverb *de gustibus non disputandum* proves that Europe has no monopoly of taste, in all the poems I have read it is only recently that I have found this most modern and vital aspect of contemporary life rhythmically as well as idealistically promulgated and communicated altogether adequately in direct proportion to the remarkable subject dealt with."

We are moved by such a sentence. But we are not

[1] *Rhyme and Relativity:* An Anthology of American Poems Apostrophising the Theories of Einstein. Collected and edited by Warren Stoddard Breathweight. Small, Little & Klein.

convinced. It seems incredible—this communion of poets lifting their voices in tuneful unanimity on any given topic, especially on so abstractly scientific a theme. One is willing to excuse even if one cannot always follow the poets in their flights through the technical empyrean; one can understand their desire to explore continually higher altitudes. But higher mathematics—! Here, frankly, we part company. It is our opinion that the representative American poets whose names (significantly maimed by missing letters) embellish this collection have had little, if anything, to do with it. Of course we may be mistaken. *The Times* vouches for the authenticity of the work and the publisher consistently refuses to answer any inquiries, fearing that it may cause undue publicity. In such a situation all sides should be heard. Let the affirmative speak. Thus the publisher's paper-jacket:

> "This is the era of anthologies. There is scarcely an animal, school of thought, experiment in technique, *locale* or topic of conversation that has not been made the excuse for a collection of verse. We have anthologies of songs by women, songs for men, jingles for children; anthologies of prose poems, ghost poems, horse poems, cat poems, doggerels; anthologies of poems about war, the dance, gardens, Christianity and Kansas.

"It is all the more amazing to realize that no one heretofore has made a timely collection of poems inspired by the Einstein Theory of Relativity. The fact that there are, as yet, few such poems to be gathered is beside the point. The verses which have been collected here call attention to new and profound impulses which are stirring this generation; they reflect such provocative phenomena as *Relative Motion, Substitutes for Gravitation, The Michelson-Morley Experiments, Time as a Fourth Dimension, Deflected Light-Rays, non-Euclidean Warps in Space* and *The Shifting of Spectral Lines toward the Red.*"

Now the negative side. . . . But it occurs to us, rather suddenly, that we can prove our point not so much by argument as by quotation. The following examples, chosen more or less haphazardly from the first and least abstruse section, should support our contention. We reprint them *verbatim* without further comment and, confident of the intelligent verdict of our readers, we rest our case.

RELATIVITIES

By Edw-n Arlin-ton Robins-n

WHAT wisdom have we that by wisdom all
Sources of knowledge which the years suggest,
Hidden in rubric, stone or palimpsest,
Will turn and answer us because we call?
About us planets rise and systems fall
Where, lost to all but matter, Newtons rest;
And who are we to label worst and best
While all of force is gravitational?

Held by a four-dimensional concern,
He gropes among the atoms to beseech
A swifter sublimation that may reach
A little further than the funeral urn.
And we, who always said that we could teach,
Have nothing much to say and more to learn.

GUESSERS

By C-rl Sandb-rg

Old man Euclid had 'em guessing.
He let the wise guys laugh and went his way.
Planes, solids, rhomboids, polygons—
Signs and cosines—
He had their number;
Even the division of a circle's circumference by its diameter never fazed him—
It was Pi to him.

Galileo told 'em something.
"You're nuts," they said, "you for the padded cell, you for the booby hatch and the squirrel cage."
"Have your laugh," he answered.
"Have your laugh and let it ride.
Let it ride . . . for a thousand years or so."

Newton let 'em grin and giggle.
He smiled when they chuckled, "Nobody home,"

He looked 'em over
and went on listening to damsons, listening to autumn apples falling with their "now you see it, now you don't."
"Maybe," is all he told 'em, "perhaps is all the answer . . . perhaps and . . . who knows . . . in a thousand years."

And now, bo, here's this Einstein;
Good for a laugh in all the funny sections,
Sure-fire stuff in movies, comic-operas, burlesque, jazz parlors, honky tonks, two-a-day.
Somebody asks him "How about Euclid? . . . Was he all twisted? . . . and is it true your kink in space will put the kibosh on Copernicus?"
Einstein looks 'em over and tells 'em "Maybe . . . and then again . . . perhaps."
He says "The truth is all—supposing . . . the truth is all . . . come back and ask me . . . in a thousand years."

THE SAGGING BOUGH

By Rob-rt Fr-st

THERE, where it was, we never noticed how,
  Flirting its tail among the smoothed-off rocks,
The brook would spray the old, worm-eaten bough,
  That squeaked and scratched like puppies in a box.

Whether the black, half-rotted branch leaned down,
  Or seemed to lean, for love, or weariness
Of life too long lived out, or hoped to drown
  Its litter of last year's leaves, we could not guess.

Perhaps the bough relaxed as though it meant
  To give its leaves their one taste of depravity;
Or, being near the grave itself, it bent
  Because of nothing more than gravity.

THE TIME-SPACE JAZZ

By Vach-l Lin-say

I

To be intoned in a heavy baritone with a touch of pomposity.

When Lincoln was a little boy,
In Springfield,
Illinois,
The land was torn with slavery and dissension.
Fort Sumter had not fallen to the foe.
No one would dare discuss the fourth dimension.
"Uncle Tom's Cabin" came to Mrs. Stowe.
Commodore Perry started for Japan.
The Whigs now dubbed themselves "Republican."
Stephen A. Douglas, called "The Little Giant."
Brought fire and civil war to bleeding Kansas.
John Brown and his three sons became defiant.
Whittier dreamed and wrote his deathless stanzas.
But though the heart of truth was beating there,
Transfusing all the air,
There was no beauty, fantasy or joy,
In Springfield,
Illinois.

II

And now to-day, *Oratorically.*
When Science holds its mighty sway,
On Springfield corners and in Springfield streets,
Where'er the village passion beats,
In lowly chapels or electric signs,
The new gods have their shrines.
John L. Sullivan and old Walt Whitman,
Mark Twain, Roosevelt, Waldo Emerson,
Pocahontas and Booth and Bryan,
Einstein, with prophecies of space and Zion—
Their names are spelled in characters of light,
Their names are legends;
Their names are glory;
Their names are blazoned on the sky at night.
Their spirits strengthen every blade of grass,
The lost souls rise and cheer them when they pass.
Star-hearted Lucifer takes off his hat, *With a slight suggestion of "Roll dem Cotton Bales."*
Saints so holy are prostrated flat.
Daniel and his lions do a ragtime dance;
Jazz-jumping angels have to shout and prance.
Adam and Eve learn the snake-dance there;
Old Elisha does the toddle with the bear. *With increasing speed and energy.*
All creation is a-swaying to and fro—
Andrew Jackson comes with Old Black Joe,
Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. . . .

While the tune of the spheres is a cosmic Kallyope.
Bringing hope, bringing hope, bringing hope, bringing hope,
Singing joy, singing joy, singing joy.
To every heart that still may grope
In Springfield,
Illinois.

EINSTEIN

By Edw-n Markh-m

We drew our circle that shut him out,
This man of Science who dared our doubt.
But ah, with a fourth dimensional grin,
He squared a circle that took us in!

FROM "THE OHM'S DAY-BOOK"

By Edg-r L-e Mast-rs—*Later Style*

Take any spark you see and study it;
It brightens, trembles, spurts and then goes out.
The light departs and leaves, we say, behind—
Who knows?
Succinctly, then, great men and little sparks
Are all the same in some vast dynamo
Of humming ether, ringed with unseen coils.
Now here am I, the smallest unit of
Electrical resistance. What to me,
You'd say, are systems of coördinates,
Or spectral lines, or *vibgyor* or all
The Morley-Michelson experiments?
Just this, the tiniest flash of energy,
Started beyond the furthest reach of space,
Makes ripples that will spread until the rings
Circling in that black pool of time, will touch
All other forms of energy and light.
Everything is related, all must share
Uncommon destinies.

The problem is
To find the hidden soul, it's with ourselves—
Within ourselves, if we know where to look;
A fourth dimension of reality.
But let us take an instance: Some one's shot.
Where? At Broadway and Forty-second Street.
The placed is fixed by two coördinates,
Crossing at sharp right angles in a plane,
But was it on the ground or in the air,
Below the surface or the thirtieth floor
Of that gray office-building? Knowing this,
Fixes the third dimension. But we must
Still find a fourth to make it definite;
Concretely, Time. If then we trace the source
And, having clearly mapped what's physical,
We turn to instinct, phototropic sense,
And glimpse a moment through the crumbling veil,
The soul, democracy, America;
A new Republic. . . .

(*and so on for 357 lines*)

whip remorselessly. The strong horse flies as though each poem were a gruelling race; his headlong pace is a gallop, at best. Every step is a dazzle of light; a bright adventure in excitement. He is pressed on . . . and on. . . . A zest that crackles and knows no rest.

Everything fares the same; it shares this unrelieved tension. At the mention of a name, of an enamel-studded frieze, budded fruit trees or flower gardens—everything suddenly hardens, shoots, flames, spins, turns and burns with an almost savage intensity. Nature seems to have lost its usual stature; it becomes an immense contrapuntal series of frontal attacks; an unrelaxed assault of suns that clang like gongs, clouds that crash and splinter, boughs that clash and rouse their roots, a lark that "shoots up like a popgun ball." . . . It is all rigorously fortissimo, enthralling in its vigor; appallingly energetic.

Musically alone, the tones of it are full of uncanny changes. A strange and unearthly symphony is heard here; queer tympani add their blows to this polyphonic prose. There is the patter of clicking bones and the quick, dry chatter of xylophones, the hiss of tambourines, the cymbals' shivering kiss, the high quiver of triangles, the clack and mutter of drum-sticks tapping on slackened guts.

And colors! Nothing duller than bright blue, new white, light green of an almost obscene brilliance; mil-

lions of reds and purples that blaze and splutter; buttercup-yellows and iris-tinted fires that mellow the polished sides of space. One fades, and fresh shades spring up in its place. Jades—like the wings of a dragonfly resting on young lily-pads. Crimson—like the tongue of carmine that skims on the tips of rusty peonies. Lilac—with the faint dust that slips over the wistaria blossoms. Silver as magnolias stroked by moonlight, blue-mauve, dove-gray, livid azaleas, fireball dahlias . . . all of them shouting their vivid promises. Let the doubting Thomases scatter their seeds of distrust. Matter is matter. Who needs further affirmation? Let the stars shatter themselves, heedless of gravitation; there is an end even to infinity. Straight lines bend not only in a poet's rhymes. Times have changed. Science is ranged on the side of the singer who has learned to distort the widely assorted phenomena of life. Circles are no longer round. Sound can be seen. Light can be weighed. Black is made white; the last have come first. The worst, one thinks, may be the best. East is West: and the great world shrinks.

THE DANCE OF DUST

By Conr-d Aik-n

So, to begin with, ghosts of rain arise
And blow their muffled horns along the street . . .
Who is it wavers through this nebulous curtain,
Floating on watery feet?

Wind melts the walls. A heavy ray of starlight,
Weighed down with languor, falls. Black trumpets cry.
The dancers watch a murder. Cool stars twinkle.
In a broken glass, three faded violets die.

And so, says Steinlin, the dust dissolves,
Plots a new curve, strikes out tangentially,
Builds its discordant music in faint rhythms
Under a softly crashing sea.

"I am the one," he cries, "who stumbles in twilight,
I am the one who tracks the anfractuous gleam" . . .
The futile lamps go out. The night is a storm of silence. . . .
What do we wait for? Is it all a dream?

ADVICE TO THE FOURTH DIMENSION

By Maxw-ll Bod-nheim

Region of shiftless equilibrium,
The curtly undulating worlds
Weave insolently in your heart,
Like icily-forgotten tunes of atoms.
Time, with a slanting hunger, gropes
And, in a virginal precision, takes your hand.
Circles, no longer arrogantly round,
But like a battered primrose dripping flame,
Are warps in nature.
No line is straight
But lifts long, passionless rhythms till it meets
Its parallel in drab exuberance.

Region of shiftless equilibrium,
Be not concerned by tricks of time and space.
Only you can twist an acrid meaning out of words
Or into them.

ROUND

By Alfr-d Kr-ymborg

Worlds, you must tell me—
What?
What is the answer to it all?
Matter.

Matter, answer me—
What?
What are the secrets of your strength?
Molecules.

Molecules, be honest—
What?
What may be groping at your roots?
Atoms.

Atoms, I ask you—
What?
What have you hidden in your hearts?
Electrons.

Electrons, I charge you—
What?
What are you building in your wombs?
Worlds.

Worlds, you must tell me — — —

CANZONE

By Ezr- Po-nd

All' acquisto di gloria e di fama. . . .
—Early Italian.

Come, my songs, distorted, spoken against,
Come, let us pity those who have one-dimensional minds,
Let us pity those who move smugly
in two or even three dimensions,
Bound to a relative mortmain.
Ma si morisse!
Take thought of the dull, the hopelessly-enmeshed;
The young enslaved by the old,
The old embittered by the young.

Go, with a clashing of many echoes and accents,
Go to Helicon—on the Hudson.
Perform your naked rites, your cephalic dances;
Shout your intolerant cat-calls from the bus-tops,
(We have kindred in common, Walt Whitman)
Parade your tag-ends and insolences,
Cry them on State Street:
Ch'è be'a. . . .[1]

[1] *Bella.*

Take no thought of being presentable.
Lest they say you grow shabby,
I shall find fresh raiment for you
out of time and spaciousness;
A shirt out of Provence, green slippers from Cathay,
Assorted mantles, slightly worse for wear, from Montparnasse,
And fillets, somewhat dusty, out of Ithaca.
Who shall say you have become
A slave to your technique
like Chloris, who would flirt
Even with her own shadow?
Who proclaims this?
B-a-a-a-a-amen.

EINSTEIN AMONG THE COFFEE-CUPS

By T. S. Eli-t

Deflective rhythm under seas
  Where Sappho tuned the snarling air;
A shifting of the spectral lines
  Grown red with gravity and wear.

New systems of coördinates
  Disturb the Sunday table-cloth.
Celestine yawns. Sir Oliver
  Hints of the jaguar and sloth.

A chord of the eleventh shrieks
  And slips beyond the portico.
The night contracts. A warp in space
  Has rumors of Correggio.

Lights. Mrs. Blumenthal expands;
  Diaphragm and diastole.
The rector brightens. Tea is served;
  Euclid supplanted by the sole.

LOVE'S RELATIVITY

By S-ra Teasd-le

THE moon is in love with the nightingale,
And the nightingale worships the rose;
But the red rose bleeds for the young and pale
Queen of the garden close.

The young queen turns to a singing clown
Whose lips have a single tune;
She leans to him like a ray bent down. . . .
But he is in love with the moon.

THE NEW ATOM

By Lou-s Unterm-yer

And suddenly analysis
  Grows futile; thought and language rasp.
And all dimensions are contained in this
  One restless body that I clasp.

Atoms disintegrate while drums
  Beat their red lightnings through each vein.
Each angry crowded molecule becomes
  A world, a bleeding battle-plain.

A thousand orbits twist and glow,
  The flesh reveals its secret den. . . .
And so (in rhyme) I leave the earth, and so
  I come to your white breast again.

THE SPELL OF THE ELECTRON

By Rob-rt W. Serv-ce

Now this is the spell the philosophers tell
When you're puzzled by all their revisions:
The laws that we knew are not always true,
We must change them to suit the conditions.
Though you roar as you eat only red-blooded meat
And thrill with each virile sensation,
No atom or ape, no figure or shape,
By God! can escape gravitation.

For this is the lesson of Einstein;
Answer Death's grin with a scoff.
Glaring and tearing at all you resent,
Fight though the light is battered and bent—
Fight till the flesh drops off!

You may clench your fists at the scientists,
At calculus, cubes or quadratics;
You may curse and thrash since the old laws clash
With relativist kinematics;
You may goad your sides till the blood-red tides
Run off and the dry bones clatter—

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PLASTIC BOOK BADGE MUST
REMAIN IN POCKET AT ALL
TIMES. A FEE WILL BE
CHARGED IF BADGE IS LOST.

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